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ABSTRACT

These proceedings present five papers and other highlights of a symposium held to stimulate efforts to provide continuity and support for children and families in transition from early childhood to early elementary school programs. These papers are included: (1) "Connecting with Preschools: How Our Schools Help (and Fail to Help) Entering Kindergartners," by John Love, which reports on a national study of children's transitions from preschool to school; (2) "Interagency Collaboration Providing Continuity of Services to Young Children," by Thomas W. Payzant, which describes San Diego's New Beginnings Program and its health, housing, and educational social services components; (3) "The Transitions of Children and Parents from Preschools to Public School Settings," by Willie Epps, which stresses the importance of procedural and pedagogical continuity, parent involvement, expectations of schools, and communication between preschools and public schools; (4) "A Look at Continuity Issues from Preschool to Early Primary Grades: Assessment and Evaluation," by Samuel Meisels, which suggests that student progress be assessed through work sampling, portfolios, and teacher reports; and (5) "School Readiness and Transition from School: The Current Debate," by Donna Foglia and John Bergan, which stresses the need to change assessment methods. In addition, the proceedings summarize the highlights of workshops on initiatives to ensure pedagogical continuity; vertical and horizontal continuity; interagency collaboration; links between school and students' culture; smooth transitions for children with special needs; appropriate instructional practice; and ways to assess progress. Presenters' addresses are included. (AC)

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Proceedings Paper

Links to Success: New Thinking on the Connections between Preschool, School, and Community

A Regional Symposium

January 1992

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October 1991

Links to Success:

New Thinking on the Connections between Preschool, School, and Community

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

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FWL's Center for Child and Family Studies managed both the development of the symposium agenda and logistics. Center director J. Ronald Lally and Carol Lou Young-Holt made numerous contributions to this event. Special thanks goes to Karla Nygaard, who was principally responsible for local arrangements and communications with conference participants. We also thank FranCione Allen, Fredrika Baer, Kathy Bertolucci, Darlene Marciniak, Betty Rappaport, and Sheila Signer for their valuable contributions.

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Introduction

Major change can be daunting at any age, and is especially so for young children. Research has shown that the transition from early childhood to elementary school programs can be difficult for youngsters, yet our education system has traditionally required them to make major adjustments as they move from one to the next. A preschool or childcare program can differ dramatically in philosophy and curriculum from a kindergarten program. While a preschool teacher, for example, may carefully document a child's activity with detailed observations, the same child may end up the next year with a kindergarten teacher who relies almost exclusively on standardized test scores to judge student ability.

In some cases the only common ground between a preschool and a primary school may be that the same child will attend both. The discontinuity is especially frustrating for children who experience success in one program and then suddenly find themselves thrown into a new situation with new rules where failure is a distinct possibility Without continuity of experience and continuing support when children enter early elementary school, the positive effects of a quality early childhood program can diminish.

The parents of young children also face tough transitions, often having navigate a disjointed and fragmented service systems. Those whose children need special services may find that the child who is eligible for services at one age is no longer eligible at another — even though the only change is the child's age. In the educational setting, parents may be encouraged to participate in one program but find that the next one discourages their involvement.

Such abrupt changes can be detrimental. Yet many young children and their families often have no choice but to adapt to the new situation — no matter how stressful.

Recognizing the importance of continuity for young children, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have joined together in a collaborative project geared toward stengthening linkages between early childhood and early elementary programs. The project commenced with a September 1991 national symposium on the topic and has continued with sponsorship of regional efforts, such as the recent Western Region symposium, "Links to Success." That conference was produced by Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

The regional symposium served several purposes. At one level it was a forum for disseminating to the Western Region information and ideas that had been presented at the national symposium. Several speakers from that event, namely John Love, Willie Epps, and Samuel Meisels, also spoke at the regional conference. In addition, many presenters from the Western Region reported on work of national import. At the same time, the conference represented a first step in stimulating regional efforts to provide continuity for children and families as they move from early childhood to early elementary school programs.

The symposium covered a wide range of topics, and discussion in workshops and during breaks revealed a keen interest in the issue of continuity. Many participants voiced the desire to develop better linkages between early childhood and elementary

school programs in their own localities. But as suggested by Sharon Lynn Kagan in her keynote address at the national symposium, the kind of change needed to insure continuity must occur at a deep, systemic level. Attention must be paid not only to classroom practices but to strategies for overcoming barriers to interagency collaboration. Thus, some speakers focused specifically on continuity and transition while others offered important insights on related issues, such as what it takes to establish successful interagency collaboration, culturally sensitive practices, and how to generate parental involvement.

The talks and workshop highlights in this document offer a rough survey of the territory. They address the issue of continuity in the larger context of supporting children and families throughout the early childhood years. If comprehensive services for families with young children were widely instituted, the problem of continuity would be addressed naturally as early childhood, health, social, and mental health services linked together and with schools. In the meantime, however, early childhood and elementary school programs need not wait to take action. They can coordinate efforts using the ideas and strategies articulated in this document to facilitate young children's transition from early childhood services to school — and they should. For one point was made abundantly clear at this symposium: the degree of success experienced by young children and families as they move from one type of educational or service program to another depends to a great extent on the ability of such programs to work together.

Peter L. Mangione, Ph.D.
Symposium Director

Chapter One

Connecting with Preschools: How Our Schools Help (and Fail to Help) Entering Kindergartners

(Report on the National Study of Children's Transitions from Preschool to School)

John Love is director of the Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy at RMC Research Corporation in Hampton, New Hampshire. For the past three years he has directed the Department of Education's national study of children's transition into public school. Love has spent the last 20 years conducting research, evaluation, and policy studies with programs such as Head Start, Follow Through, and Chapter 1. He is currently working on two other Department of Education projects, a study of before and after school programs, and an observational study of early childhood programs.

It's a real pleasure for me to be here to see some of my old friends at Far West Laboratory and to be back in my home state. I want to begin by giving credit to two people who are not here. First is the project officer for the National Transition Study in the U.S. Department of Education, Elizabeth Farquhar who designed the study and guided our work and was a real colleague to us over the last three years. She is also the author of the paper that is in your folder called "Preparing Young Children for Success," the Department of Education's new brochure relating to the issues of readiness and the first national goal. In it she talks about some transition issues, and a number of her ideas have come from our work together on this study. A second person who's been indispensable in our work in the last three years is Mary Ellin Logue of RMC, who was not only a colleague of mine but co-author and collaborator on the report.

I should also say that the report is going through a process at the Department of Education unlike any I've ever experienced. We submitted an initial draft in January 1991 which was reviewed by an advisory panel. We submitted a revised draft in June that essentially has been approved, except for some haggling over a few sentences. When that is done, I will see that everybody on the registration list for this conference gets a copy of the executive summary, which will have instructions for ordering the full report.

Beyond the Facts and Figures: A Focus on Kids

I'm going to talk about a lot of findings that are based on what's happening in our schools. But I want to begin by saying that we don't want to forget that our real concern is the children.

> ***"Children come to school ready to learn. It's up to schools to provide a proper learning environment."***

I have spent the last two days visiting some before and after-school programs in the Bay Area as part of another study. Yesterday I was in a child development center at about two o'clock when 30 first, second, and third graders were brought over from the elementary school across the street to be in the after-school program until a parent or sibling or grandparent picked them up at 5:30 or 6:00. They began with about 45 minutes of group time — singing and chanting and greeting each other — led by a head teacher, an assistant teacher, and a classroom volunteer. Then they split up so that they could have their snacks and choose activities. Those children who had homework were asked to work on it at a certain table where the teachers could provide some help.

Well, I was trying to be the objective observer on the side, because we're interested in what goes on in after-school programs and the extent to which they are also developmentally appropriate. But a little second grader, whom I'll call Kwame, came down and sat near me. He was working on this little ditto

sheet on which there were sequences of clusters of dots and he was supposed to circle certain clusters. Very carefully, with his tongue sticking out of his mouth, he was circling every cluster, going right from the top left-hand side of the page across the row down to the next row. Looking at it upside-down, I read the instruction and I thought, uh oh, this kid's going to be in trouble when he takes this back to the teacher tomorrow and she tries to interpret what this child knows. So I asked him if he had read what it said at the top of each row. He looked at it and mouthed a few words, but it was obvious he was having trouble reading it.

I told him that the first sentence on the left-hand side says, "This group has six dots." And over on the right it said, "Ring all the groups that have six dots." His eyes widened, and he said, "Aha." He counted all the dots, and he erased all the circles from around the ones that were not six dots. So he was able to complete this activity as soon as he realized what the instructions were. Now this was not an assessment tool, although the teacher was going to be using it for making interpretations about the child's math and counting abilities the next day. The problem was the child wasn't reading the instruction, either because he couldn't or because it hadn't been explained to him or because he was just going merrily on his way, thinking it was an exciting activity. I think of children like Kwame and what kind of experience they have as they go from one kind of program into another. In this case it was from regular school into the after-school program, but it could just as easily have been going from a preschool program that has one set of expectations and procedures into a kindergarten program that has a different set.

Some Questions to Keep in Mind

Today I'm going to talk about why we did this study, review some highlights of our findings, and tell you about some factors that seemed to us associated with the extent to which schools are doing transition activities. Then I'll describe the kindergarten programs that these children transition into, and some of the difficulties school people told us children have adjusting to kindergarten. I'll conclude with some thoughts about how we might focus our energies in order to maximize our efforts.

But I want to start by asking each of you to take a little test. On the blue cards I've given you, write down your answers to these four questions: 1) What percent of schools in this country do you think have made arrangements so that all parents of entering kindergartners visit the school before kindergarten starts? 2) In what percentage of schools do all the kindergartners talk with all pre-kindergarten teachers before kindergarten starts? 3) What percentage of schools do you think have a written policy specifying what transition activities should take place? 4) Do you think it's easier for schools to create transition activities when there is a preschool program located in the elementary school building?

Why Study the Transition to Kindergarten?

Life, as we all know, is full of transitions. We worry about transitions from school to the world of work, from elementary school to junior high and so forth. But there seems to be special concern about the transition that takes place as children enter their first public school experience. There are six reasons, I think, for concern with transition:

- **We want to retain the benefits of early childhood education programs.** This is the main reason why the Department of Education wanted to do this study. A major rationale was long-standing concern about the apparent drop-off in gains from quality preschool programs like Head Start as children get to second, third and fourth grades. One hypothesis has been that the known benefits of preschool might last longer if there is better continuity between the pre- and elementary school experience. Now I need to point out that this was not a child impact study. It was a survey to find out what schools are doing. However, we're involved in some other studies now that are looking at what happens to children as they go from preschool to kindergarten programs in Chapter 1.

- **The way transition is handled may be important in reducing the stress children might experience upon entering kindergarten.** This fall when the newspapers came out with articles about helping parents get children ready for kindergarten, the *Boston Globe* quoted a psychologist saying that the kindergarten and first grade years are the most stressful time in the first 10 years of childhood. So at least some people believe this,

and maybe the way we handle this transition could help reduce this stress for children.

I have here a list of ways in which kindergarten really may mean new and stressful experience for children. It includes everything from kindergarten classrooms that look and feel different to the fact that the children may be riding a school bus for the first time. We know that kindergartens in many areas are becoming more academic, despite everything that the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is trying to do. In fact that's one of the findings I'll talk about when we get to what kindergarten programs look like. Most children are entering a longer school day, they have larger classes, and fewer parents and volunteers in the classroom. For all these reasons, the child may well look around and say, "Gee, Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore."

- **We need to create an appropriate degree of continuity for children as they go into kindergarten.** I say appropriate degree because we don't expect everything to stay the same. We've already heard mention today of three important aspects of continuity: philosophy, pedagogy, and structure. I think we have to look too at some things continuity does not mean. It doesn't mean you have the same program in kindergarten that you had in preschool. It doesn't mean that children aren't developing or changing or that the school should provide children with exactly the same learning task they had in preschool. It doesn't mean that their materials, tasks, and experience shouldn't get more complex as they get older or that there shouldn't be any new challenges for them.

Especially, it doesn't mean that we can't be concerned with the content and quality of the program. In other words, continuity should not be an end in itself. I don't think anyone would suggest that children who happened to be in the unfortunate situation of having a developmentally inappropriate preschool should be provided with a developmentally inappropriate kindergarten so they have continuity.

- **Today's children typically come to kindergarten with different experiences than kids had five or 10 years ago.** More and more children are having some kind of formal program experience before staring kindergarten, whether at a daycare program, nursery school, Head Start or whatever. According to from the annual National Population Survey, the number of children with some kind of formal experience has increased dramatically. But we have to pay attention to the fact that children's early experience may be different depending on their circumstances. Children from high income families are more likely to have a preschool, pre-kindergarten formal experience than low-income children. So when you look at children coming to your school, you can't disregard their backgrounds.

- **Children are going through a particularly critical period of development at four to five years of age.** This period is particularly important in terms of things like development of self-concept, language, and degrees of self-control and independence. A lot of changes are going on within the child, even as the child and her family are trying to cope with all the changes going on around her.

- **Transition relates to the first of our national education goals.** I think by concerning ourselves with issues of transition and continuity, we're basically looking at strategies that will help children start school ready to learn. Here I want to express one of my own pet peeves. In all the discussions about the school readiness goal — even the one this morning about the value of authentic assessment, which I wholly favor — we're still putting the onus on the child to change so he'll be ready. And I think the National Association of Elementary School Principals and even the National Governors Association allude to the fact that children are ready to learn but schools must take responsibility for being ready to provide children with a proper learning environment.

What Schools Are Doing to Help Children Make This Transition

With that kind of background, we set out to learn what schools are doing. We did a survey of approximately 1,200 elementary schools that have kindergartens. This was a nationally representative survey with a stratified random sample of schools, so we're pretty confident that the results can be

generalized to schools in the United States that have kindergartens. We also supplemented the survey with site visits to a small number of schools with very diverse characteristics, which really helped us in understanding and interpreting the national survey data.

Using a rating scale format, we asked schools to tell us about 11 different transition activities. Then we did a factor analysis of those activities and found that basically they fall into two types:

1) The first includes activities such as school visits and orientations that involve parents in some way. So now we come to the first answer on your blue card: 32 percent of the schools said that *all* children and parents visit the school before the beginning of the school year. Eighty-one percent said that at least half of incoming parents and children visit. A lot of parents and children are getting a chance to have some kind of orientation before the kindergarten year begins. The majority of the schools — 68 percent — have a formal or near-formal arrangement for these visits. So not only are these orientation visits taking place, but they're planned or organized.

Schools also reported that they're encouraging parents to participate in classroom activities that might help with the transition — for example, in the first week of school the parent may come and stay with the child for part of the day. Only 13 percent of the schools had no organized effort at all to do this. So in terms of activities that involve parents, schools aren't doing too badly.

2) The other type of activity was something we labeled coordination and communication between the kindergarten and preschool levels. These activities are probably more complex and require more planning and organization. For example, we asked to what extent do schools actually coordinate curriculum. Now this had the lowest grading of any of the transition activities we asked about. Forty-nine percent say the kindergarten curriculum is completely independent of what's going on in the preschool classrooms. So kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs are pretty independent of each other.

It seemed to us that communication is a pretty basic requirement if you're going to create continuity for children. So we asked questions on two kinds of communication: about students and about curriculum issues. To answer the second question on your blue card, 10 percent of the schools reported that all prekindergarten teachers or caregivers talk with kindergarten teachers about their new students. Almost one-fifth — 18 percent — say there's no communication about any of the entering students. The typical situation seems to be communication only when there's some special reason for it — which is certainly admirable, and I'm glad that's going on, but it's probably not enough to create real continuity for all children.

If teachers at the two levels don't talk to each other very much about the children, they talk even less about curriculum issues. Almost half — 46 percent — report very little communication about curriculum. So what kind of continuity do you imagine these schools are providing for children, if the people responsible for kindergarten programs aren't talking with those providing the preschool experience?

The next question related to communication had to do with receiving information — records and that sort of thing. At least kindergarten teachers seem to be getting formal records about the children. Seventy-five percent said some to all of the teachers received "some" to "very extensive" information about the children. Here I was glad we did some site visits, because we talked with preschool and kindergarten teachers who receive information. We were surprised that a number of kindergarten teachers say, "Yes, I've got the records on those children, but I haven't looked at them. I didn't want to be biased. I wanted to form my own opinion." If the kindergarten teachers aren't trusting what's there or are feeling they want to make up their own minds, that perhaps says something about what's in the records, how the records are established, and what kind of information is transmitted. So we may need better coordination or joint planning to create better trust so that the records are meaningful to both the preschool and kindergarten people.

Finally, we asked about the extent of transition policies. In answer to the third question on your card, only 13 percent of schools have a written transition policy. So whatever is going on in the way of transition activities is not reflected very much in formal school policies. Now you can say the important thing isn't policies but what the teachers and parents are doing. But if you remember those three

major aspects of transition — philosophy, pedagogy and structure — policy is a structural variable and reflects an overall philosophy. So on at least two counts, I think policy is important. And many times people are not doing things unless they are required by policies.

What Accounts for the Differences in What Schools Do?

We did a great deal of examination and analysis to determine what factors in the schools seemed to make a difference in the frequency of different kinds of transition activities. And one important factor was the presence of a pre-kindergarten program in the school building. In four of the 11 factors there was a significant effect of having a preschool in the building. Now these were not large effects, although in some cases I think the difference between 3.2 and 2.5 on communicating about curricula probably is an important difference on a five point scale.

So there are more communication and coordination activities going on when there is a preschool in the building. But the fact that you have ratings of 3.3 and 2.7 and so on even when there is not a preschool in the building tells you that location is not the whole story. Again, I was glad we went out and visited a number of schools, because we saw firsthand some really interesting things going on. This leads us to the basic conclusion that in general having a preschool in the building is an advantage and can help you in planning and establishing transition activities, but it's no guarantee that those activities will occur. In some cases it can be a disadvantage — for example where only some of the kindergarten children come from the preschool that's in that building. Suppose you have a pre-K that serves 30 children, and you have 60 children in your kindergarten classes. The other 30 come from a program somewhere else, or they come directly from home, or they've been in something like family daycare.

I don't have any national data on this, but based on our site visits I suspect there is a tendency to focus more on transition and continuity for the kids who are in the building already and kind of forget about the other kids. I was at one program that had terrific continuity with the pre-K program located in the elementary school, but none with the Head Start program four blocks away, though about 16 of the children came from there. So location does make a difference, but we can't assume it's going to guarantee anything.

Another factor is the leadership and commitment of school personnel, particularly the principal. We saw on our site visits that when you have a principal committed to creating continuity for children, then you're more likely to have transition activities going on.

School climate also makes a difference. One set of questions on our national survey was taken from some of the school climate literature. The questions had to do with attitudes towards parents, and children, and with school people's expectations about how far children will go in school and how successful they will be. We found that if the school climate is positive, then it's likely there will be more transition activities.

We also learned that some differences in programs relate to the school's poverty level. Because the Department of Education operates a Chapter 1 program and has a sort of legislative mandate to be concerned with disadvantaged children, we looked at all of our analyses in terms of the school's poverty level, defined by the percentage of children who qualify for free or reduced price lunch. And that made a difference in almost everything I've talked about. Coordination and communication activities are more prevalent in high poverty schools. We can all speculate whether that might have to do with federal programs or requirements for parent involvement, but it was an interesting finding.

A Look at the Elementary Schools

We obviously can't talk about transition without thinking about the context the children are coming into. We estimate from the survey that about 27 percent of the elementary schools have some kind of pre-kindergarten program, so that's a pretty small minority. And of course we only surveyed schools that have kindergartens. The typical kindergarten program is half-day, with 69 children enrolled and an average of three teachers and one-and-a-half aides — which gives us an average staff-child ratio of one to 16. So in 1989-90 when the survey was done, the staff-child ratio wasn't too bad. Breakdown by length of day shows that most children are in half-day kindergartens, although

quite a sizable number — 37 percent — are in full school-day kindergartens.

One of the most fascinating parts of this survey is our analysis of the nature of the kindergarten programs. We had 21 descriptors that we asked the respondents to rate on a scale of one to five. About half the items were what the field describes as developmentally appropriate practices, and half were characteristics that would be associated with more academic or teacher-directed programs. To give you some examples, developmental items included things like use of learning centers, small group projects, free play activities, and child selection of their own learning activities. These were written out as statements, and the respondent was asked to rate how much their kindergarten program resembled that statement. A rating of five would mean they were a lot like that. Academic activities were things like daily use of workbooks, regular testing, grading, large group instruction, and activities primarily directed by the teacher.

We thought initially that these 21 statements would give us a nice continuum of practice, with the highly developmental kindergartens at one end and the highly inappropriate programs at the other. But it didn't come out that way. We got two very independent factors in our analysis. Developmentally appropriate developmentally inappropriate practice were seen as independent dimensions by the respondents. In other words, these people saw very little conflict in having both of these kinds of activities going on. So they would say, "Yes, we're a five on 'children get to choose their own learning activities,' and yes, we're a five on 'using regular testing to check on kids' progress.'" Or, "Yes, we're a four on 'children have active play,' but we're also a four or a five on 'using worksheets.'" That tells us there's something wrong with the way people are hearing the NAEYC message about developmentally appropriate practice.

And when we asked, "How would you label yourself?" most schools said, "We're developmental." And yet the developmental programs, as they called them, involved a lot of academic practices.

One of the most discouraging facts to me is that allowing children to select their own learning activities — which I consider one of the hallmarks of developmentally appropriate practice — was reported as less likely to happen than any of the other developmental activities or strategies. So the lowest rating of any item was allowing children to select their own learning activities.

Now the next point may be difficult to explain in a short time, but I think it's important. It comes from our site visits; we couldn't do this with 1,200 schools in a survey. Using the early childhood environment rating scale — a measure widely regarded as a good index of developmental appropriateness — we looked at preschool and kindergarten programs in eight sites and came up with an average rating to see what would happen. On my chart here, an example is Westside, which had a kindergarten rating near number five. But if you look down the scale, you see that they were a little less than four on the preschool scale. So that means that children in Westside on the average are going from a preschool program that rates sort of middle-of-the-road on developmental appropriateness into a kindergarten that's up closer to five, which Harms and Clifford would describe as a good developmentally appropriate program. On the other hand, we had children in programs like Seaview and Plainville whose preschool's developmental appropriateness rated up near six but their kindergarten was only about three-and-a-half to four.

The goal here would be to get programs like Pioneer and Bear Valley, which are on the diagonal I've drawn in. They're fairly high up — between five and six — for both preschool and kindergarten. So programs on that diagonal give us sort of an operational definition of curricular or pedagogical continuity. I think that's an interesting way to think about looking at the relationship between preschool and kindergarten programs. And we're currently involved in a study with the Department of Education in which we'll get data like that at the individual child level, where we can say, "This child experienced such and such a quality of preschool and kindergarten program."

Where Should We Focus Our Transition Energies?

Before I conclude, I want to mention that we also have data on the school practices on retention, extra-year programs such as readiness and transition classes, and — as I said earlier — a whole host of data on how these things are influenced by the school poverty level and also the size of the school. Again, we found a lot of data supporting the

general literature that in general small is better as far as elementary schools are concerned.

I think that one of the things the study helps us remember is that there are a lot of differences among schools — differences in the dynamics of kindergarten classes and among the children who are entering kindergarten. So it's very difficult, in fact I would say impossible, to provide a formula that would say, "these are the kinds of transition activities that would be most effective in your school." They really have to be tailored to the particular situation. That's why I like to say that transition is a process. It's not just a set of activities that anybody can take from a workbook and implement. It really has to be worked out at the local level with people who understand the situation, the children, the dynamics, and the policies.

We try to illustrate this in a sequence of stages. We start out talking about children coming from preschool or home and having to make some adjustment as they enter school. The first thing the child probably notices is the kindergarten classroom. And so at one level we have to think about transition to the differing features of kindergartens, and we talked about what some of those features might be. But that kindergarten classroom doesn't function in isolation. It's part of a system, and an important part of the system is the school itself. The school has a number of characteristics, including its size, the make-up of its student body, the philosophy of its leaders, the school climate and so on. And that school is operating within the larger context of the district with its policies, regulations, procedures, and leadership. All of that, according to data from the survey, can be affected by such things as the size and poverty of both the district and the school.

This again emphasizes the process nature of transition and how you have to look at a lot of different elements in order to be successful in using transition energies.

Thoughts about the Impact on Children

I said we had no data on the effects that these practices have on children. But I want to tell you what I think about that. I think inviting parents and children to the school to meet the teacher and to see what the place is like before school starts is a good thing. But in and of itself, I don't think it will create continuity. Providing teachers with records of the children's past performance and the insights of the child's Head Start or daycare giver is a good idea. But that doesn't help the child if the teacher doesn't have a framework for interpreting that information or if the teachers feels she already knows about those kids and doesn't need additional input.

Finally, I think all our efforts to produce greater continuity for children will be wasted if they're based on helping children get ready for a kindergarten experience that sits children in rows, gives them worksheets to fill out, tells them what they should be doing, and offers no opportunity for the children to participate through by planning and choosing their own learning experiences under the teacher's guidance.

CHAPTER TWO

Interagency Collaboration Providing Continuity of Services to Young Children

Thomas W. Payzant has been superintendent of the San Diego City Schools since 1982. He earned a Doctorate in Educational Administration from Harvard University in 1968 and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Williams College in 1984. He is a past president of the Large City Schools Superintendents; chairman of the Board of Directors, Council for Basic Education; and a member of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

I first want to set the context for discussion about the importance of interagency collaboration. We are the only industrialized nation in world that doesn't have a carefully articulated policy on the first five years of a child's life — or even on pre-natal care, for that matter. And that's an absolute travesty.

I'm going to review a set of data that helps us understand the condition of children in this country today. I then want to tell you about an effort in San Diego called New Beginnings, designed to address the needs of our children, youth and families. Rather than setting it forth as some ideal model for providing services, I will focus on the process issues that over the last two-and-a-half years have led to New Beginnings. Then I want to end with identification of six or seven issues that are important for people like you — practitioners who can influence policy — to consider as you think about ways to better provide services and use whatever influence you have to move the policy discussion along at the local, state, and national level.

"We're looking at the whole family not just the child because we think the family is the key to bettering the child's situation."

Children in America: the Dismal Data

These data are familiar to most of you, I'm sure, but I don't think we can review them too often. When we look at the number of children who live in poverty, the numbers vary, but certainly 20 percent is conservative. And that's up from 14 percent in 1969. The ethnic and racial breakdown in California is Hispanics, 34 percent; blacks 32; Asians 27; and whites 10 percent.

We've known for a long time that only six percent of U.S. families have a working father, homemaker mother and two or more school age children. Looking at all children who live with one parent, 50 percent of the white children live with a divorced mother, 54 percent of the black children and 33 percent of the Hispanic children live with a mother who has never married. Looking at the total number of single parent families, you see that 52 percent are black, 24 percent Hispanic, 12 percent white and 10 percent Asian.

Nearly 500,000 American children now live in out-of-home placement. That may not surprise members of this audience, but a lot of educators aren't aware of it. If current trends continue, that population is estimated to increase 73.4 percent by 1995, to more than 840,000. What we're talking about is largely foster care. The number of children in foster care rose an estimated 23 percent between 1985 and 1988, as contrasted with a nine percent decline from 1980 to 1985. We all know about the increase in [reported] child abuse, which rose 82 percent just in the seven years between 1981 and 1988 — reaching 2.2 million. In 1988, deaths from child abuse exceeded 1,200, more than a 36 percent increase since 1985.

The number of youth held in public and private juvenile facilities increased 27 percent in the 10 years from 1979 to 1988.

In 1988, 375,000 infants were born drug-exposed, a quadruple increase over three years. We're now beginning to see some of those children coming into our preschools and other early childhood programs. Physicians estimate that 10 to 15 percent of the children born in urban California hospitals have drug- or alcohol-addicted mothers.

The median family income for the bottom four percent of families declined from $9,796 in 1977 to $8,919 in 1986. And if you add inflation, the drop is even more dramatic. The average income for a married couple with children in the late Eighties was $36,206; yet for female heads-of-households with children, it was only $11,299.

As of 1987, over half of all mothers with children under six and nearly 70 percent with children ages six to 17 were either seeking employment or worked in the formal labor market outside the home. Forty-two percent of white mothers and 51.4 percent of black mothers with children work. And in 1985, 62 percent of all 16- to 19-year-olds worked during some part of the year. At least one-third of all high school students hold part time jobs in any given week, and 75 percent of high school seniors work an average of 16 to 20 hours per week.

Home ownership rates for young married couples dropped from 38.9 percent in 1973 to 29.1 percent in 1987. Meanwhile, the percentage of single parent families owning homes dropped from 13.7 percent to 6.3 percent. In the past 15 years housing costs have increased three times faster than income. From 1984 to 1986 households with real income under $5,000 increased 55 percent, while the stock of low-rent housing units decreased by over 1 million.

Over 6 million households pay more than 50 percent of their incomes in rent, and another 5 million pay more than 35 percent. In 1988 the number of homeless was estimated at 2.5 million. Families composed over 50 percent of the homeless population in cities.

I certainly don't need to tell this group about Head Start. I don't know its precise costs here, but at least as of two years ago the range throughout the country was $3,500 to $5,000 per child. Compare that to the $20,000 to $25,000 annual expenditure for housing a prison inmate.

The point of all this is that we have a serious situation with respect to our children. We know that, but we have to keep reminding ourselves and then use that context — a clear understanding of the problems — to move forward with some solutions.

San Diego's Own Challenge

Now, before talking about New Beginnings, I want to say a word or two about San Diego. As of the 1990 census, San Diego is the sixth largest city in the country with a population of well over 1 million in the city and 2.4 million in the metro area.

A lot of people are surprised when they see the changes in our Asian and Hispanic population over the last decade. People assume that because we're just 17 miles from the border the population increase would be greatest among Hispanics and Latinos, but it's not. The area's Hispanic population has grown 76 percent, but the Asian population has grown 129 percent. We have a very large number of Indochinese and Filipino children, because there was a lot of in-migration of those groups from the mid-1970s to late 1980s.

This year our schools will be about 29 percent Hispanic, 19 percent Asian, 16 percent African-American, and about 36 percent Anglo. We have shifted over the past 15 to 20 years from a school system that was about 80 percent Anglo to one that is now roughly 65 to 67 percent children of color. And what's happening in schools is a prelude to what's going to be happening in the larger community later on. A lot of people look at San Diego and see a large city that's really not all that diverse. But when they go into schools they see a different story.

Over 60 different first languages are spoken in the schools, with over 30,000 students having something other than English as a first language. The city's schools have been growing by about 2,000 students a year, but this year the increase is closer to 2,500 students, the largest single year increase since 1968. But we are netting an additional 3,000 to 3,500 limited-English-proficient students each year against the lower overall net growth.

Dean Acheson, secretary of state under Truman, was said to have had a desk with nothing on it except three baskets: an in-basket, an out-basket, and "too hard." We started this morning with a lot

of data that suggests to us that it's too hard. But we have an obligation to do something to make a difference. I want to share with you our experience in San Diego, not with any sense of smugness that we have the answers to all these hard questions, but with a sense of hope that some things we're learning can be helpful to others as well.

The Origins of Change

What we're doing is called New Beginnings, and it involves as main partners San Diego County, the city of San Diego, San Diego City Schools, San Diego Community College District, the San Diego housing commission, and more recently, the University of California, San Diego Medical Center and Children's Hospital. It started with a phone call from the director of the county's department of social services, Jake Jacobsen. This guy is not your stereotypical bureaucrat. He is a cheerleader, who is open-minded and will challenge the establishment even though he's been part of it in Washington and elsewhere. He has an internal sense of optimism and cares about children, youth, and families. He called me up and said, "Why don't we get together to talk." He said he would bring the directors of county health and probation. So about two and a half years ago, we met in my office and concluded that although we sort of *knew* each other we hadn't *done* much together. Our talk came not too long after I'd tried, with the help of many others, to get a health clinic started at one of our high schools. I was torn apart on this issue, losing it on a three-two vote of the board after the conservative fundamental Protestant churches and the Catholic church formed what I think was an unholy alliance against it. A year later we came back, the board had changed a bit, and the vote went in our favor.

These three directors said they felt a little bad because they had stood on the sidelines when I took all the heat on this clinic proposal. They said that everybody was kind of scared so hadn't come out to support the idea, and that was a perfect example of how things *shouldn't* be working.

To make a long story short, we put together an initial meeting of the key policymakers in all of these governmental agencies. Most of the 25 people in the room knew *of* the other people but hadn't talked together much. We decided we really wanted to try to do something but didn't know what. Did it made sense for us to work together, and if so, how? So we began by agreeing to take one high school attendance with each of us looking at what our respective agencies were doing for the children, youth, and families there. It proved an interesting task. When we came back together with the information, we were absolutely blown away by the collective amount of money we were spending on children, youth, and families in this one high school attendance area. We found duplication and overlap and areas where the right hand didn't know what the left was doing.

Systemic Change Versus Demonstration Project

Why did we begin? Because of the growing number of children living on poverty, increasing demands for services, too ...any children not successful, dropout rates, teen pregnancies, substance abuse, child abuse and of course, inadequate resources to meet our needs and the needs of our children.

In developing New Beginnings, we've been vigilant about our commitment to the *process* of change. We developed some guiding principles that focus on improving services through fundamental institutional change - restructuring, coordinating, and integrating rather than taking a project approach. Our goal is not to have another nice little demonstration project that has a three-year life and will look nice in some evaluation while we move on to other things. We're talking about effecting radical systemic change in the way each of our institutions does business, and we're expecting that our collaboration will result in better service to children, youth, and families. It's the *process* that must be replicable, not the model. That's an important distinction if we're talking about institutional change.

We also wanted to focus on prevention and early intervention. And we're looking at the whole family, not just the child, because we think the family is the key to bettering the situation for children.

Our goal is to position ourselves so the primary funding comes not from short-term grant money but from the resources already allocated to our respective areas of responsibility. Having said that, I should tell you that we *have* gotten some short-term grants to help us with the start-up costs. However, we hope to demonstrate that our collaboration will not only improve the quality of services, but also

the efficiency with which they're delivered so we'll get more mileage from our dollars.

Getting Started

We decided to pick a school and take a look at it. We picked Hamilton Elementary School, one of the largest elementary schools in San Diego. It has over 1,300 students on a multi-track, year-round school schedule. The area from which Hamilton draws has the highest density housing, highest crime rate, and second highest child abuse rate in the city. It's a highly transient neighborhood dominated by low-income apartments. It has the highest mobility rate in the district: over the course of a year 150 students enter and leave for every 100 students enrolled. Thirty-nine percent of the students are Hispanic, 25 percent African-American , 24 percent Indochinese and nine percent white. Fifteen to 20 different languages are spoken by Hamilton students.

If you look at the California Assessment Test results, you see Hamilton's are pretty low compared to other schools in the district and the county.

We went into this with our eyes wide open, wanting to take a school where the needs were very great. In terms of the larger set of issues and long-term systemic change, we knew if we took one of the easier situations we couldn't be sure we had the process right or understood the issues correctly.

Developing a User Friendly System

Before we made any other decisions, we decided to take the time to do a feasibility study. For this we got some outside funding and help from the Stuart Foundation in San Francisco. We wanted to identify the health, social and economic needs of families; identify services they need and want; determine the barriers to receiving services; develop an integrated service delivery strategy responsive to family's needs; and identify how various institutions can work better together.

The feasibility study had a number of components. One of the things we were careful *not* to do, which I as a bureaucrat have done in the past, is to do a study just through our eyes only. We wanted a study that not only reflected what bureaucrats at all levels thought the needs were at Hamilton, but one that also got good data from the users themselves — the children and families on the receiving end, trying in many different ways to access the services they deserve.

So one component of the feasibility study was a case management study, in which we put a county social worker into the schools to work full-time for three or four months as an actual researcher. We also had each agency assign a liaison person to work with the Hamilton school staff and social worker during the case management portion of the study. The object was to increase access to agency services and at the same time increase awareness by agency staff of the needs arising at Hamilton — the barriers to receiving services, and potential changes that might be necessary. Then we had focus groups with various line workers, Hamilton staff members, and the staffs of various agencies that come into contact with children youth and family to get *their* perspective on these same issues. The groups focused on which services appear to be helpful and available and how to improve communication.

We also did a family interview study of 50 Hamilton families, again to try to understand their current needs, the barriers, communication issues and the impact of the case management approach. The families represented three distinct groups: 20 families being served by the social worker during his [temporary] stay; 15 families similar to those in group one but served by other Hamilton personnel instead of the social worker; and a third group of families who had received assistance from the school in the past but appeared to be functioning adequately during the time of the study.

To get a better handle on the mobility issue, we then did a school migration study to see where students were coming from and going to.

Sharing Information

The last component, and one of the toughest, was the match of data. We put a lot of time and energy into that, and we now have a [link] between the data bases of the county of San Diego's Department of Social Services and probation department, of the city, and of the school district. We've had to work through all kinds of federal and state confidentiality issues, and we've actually got written agreements about how to handle the data. We have one

nice by-product already: free and reduced price lunch was always a separate eligibility process with lots of paperwork but now, because of our data match, any child who qualifies for AFDC or food stamps automatically pops up in our data base as eligible for free and reduced price lunch. The parent has to sign only one form and not go through another eligibility process. That's not just limited to Hamilton. We can do that district-wide now. It's cost effective in lots of ways. For one thing, it lowers the frustration level for the poor families who in the past had to fill out another eligibility form. In some of our schools where 80 to 90 percent of the kids are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, a full-time clerk works on eligibility. You no longer need that position, so the money can go elsewhere. That's the kind of thing I'm talking about.

Here's some of what we found in the data match:

- 46 percent known to AFDC
- 84 percent eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- 20 percent known to child protective services in past seven years
- 16 percent in city housing
- 7 percent known to probation

Then we made grids and discovered:

- 64 percent of the families were known to at least one program
- 118 families were known to four programs
- Of 193 designated at-risk children in the school, 47 percent were known to the Department of Social Services

Some Conclusions

Among other things we found that differences in philosophy among agencies make cooperation difficult. Also, the worst cases were the target of the most spending, with few resources targeted to prevention and early intervention. This last is a dilemma we all face: the heavy concentration of energy and resources on the few who seem to have the greatest needs means that we're spreading time and resources more broadly over the many with differentiated degrees of need. The fear, of course, is that we'll do a little bit of everything but nothing very well.

Our study also revealed that services are fragmented with *problems* being addressed rather than families; that complex and agency-specific eligibility procedures as well as long waits to access programs operate as barriers to service for families; that lack of data among service workers and families prevents optimal service; that family mobility is a serious barrier to receiving services; and, that communication difficulties and uncertainty about where to get help leads to a general sense of distrust on the part of families.

From this we perceived a need for basic and fundamental reform in the way schools and agencies deliver services to families. We found that families see school as a safe place to get help, and certainly the school setting is a primary sustained contact point for working with families. But we concluded that collaboration should not be school governed. This is one of the big issues we had to work through: were we were really going to have a partnership and true collaboration or was there going to be one leader.

At Last New Beginnings

I'm happy to tell you that in late September we opened our center at Hamilton. For its staff we've done cross-training, taking people from different agencies and different disciplines and training them to be family services advocates. The center has a health component, a housing component, and educational social services. A family — either self-referred or referred by an agency or a teacher — gets one-stop access to eligibility services and a review of the services available to meet their needs.

We should have opened six months ago. But I'll give you an example of the kind of things you run into: the school district put three portable buildings at Hamilton. But in California we were all cutting our budgets this year, so there was no money to do the basic renovation needed for such things as the health center, office space, and counseling rooms. We had to go out and raise it through in-kind services and donations from the business community. You know, foundations love to give money for

feasibility studies but not for putting up partitions and sinks and toilets. But happily, we're now open.

Advice for Would-be Collaborators

I want to take the last few minutes to identify six or seven policy issues and offer some advice for those who want to work on collaboration.

This first is self-evident: there has to be a catalyst for change, and leaders must provide it. So where do the leaders come from? They could be department or agency heads, as was the case in San Diego, or they could be policymakers or community people. Whoever provides it, there has to be a catalyst to look systemically and to get the various players together initially.

Once that happens there must be shared goals. In our case what broke it all loose was that little study of the high school attendance area where everyone looked at what they were doing and then shared the data. The data was powerful incentive for any naysayers who might have thought it would nice to get together to chat but nothing was going to happen. Data can be very powerful if fairly used to drive decisions and create understanding.

Second, don't underestimate the amount of time necessary to work through the process issues in collaboration. Although less so now than in the first couple of years, I still spend a lot of personal time directly involved in the meetings and the decision-making process. We have a very elaborate decision-making process and governance structure among all the agencies. It's fairly independent of the regular policymakers. And remember, most of us work for elected officials, so there are also politics to deal with.

Third, don't look to one governmental entity to take the major responsibility for the effort. It's easy to try and figure out who has the greatest stake and say, "You do it, we'll follow along and help." We recognized that trap very early, then spent two-and-a-half-years on the process.. If the school district or the department of social services or anyone else had said early on, "It's ours," the whole thing would have fallen apart. With the commitment to equal partnership, the responsibility is truly shared. I don't yet understand all the sophisticated shades of what it takes to pull that together. We learned that a good deal of it initially was the chemistry of the leaders, but we're now trying to institutionalize the relationships so that if one of us leaves, it go on. We will have unleashed something that cannot be contained.

Traditional Score-Keeping Doesn't Work

In doing this sort of thing, you have to back away from the traditional pattern of keeping score, in which someone says, "The city is spending $35,671 in in-kind services, but the school district is only spending $31,275." That attitude won't cut it. In San Diego, each of the agencies made a contribution at some point when we were in trouble that went above and beyond. I had to buck school district policy to get those three portables because they were also needed for classroom space. But we weren't going to have any room for the service center at Hamilton unless we broke all the rules. I got the board to do it by saying, "Hey, this thing is going down the tubes unless we provide the space."

Other agencies did similar things. After we had tried to raise money in the community for the necessary renovations — and got some — the health department came through with some dollars that they didn't think they had originally. And Jake Jacobsen picked up a lot of the development costs for the data processing on the data match.

Through all this, you have to have patience. There's no quick fix, and we still have more questions than answers.

There is another potential trap: interagency collaboration, or whatever you want to call it, is in vogue. Everybody is talking about it. There are lots of interagency projects around the country that are collaborative, *and* there is a lot of rhetoric. This is the one place I'll sound immodest. I don't think there are very many places where people are attempting, as we are, to have the comprehensive involvement of high-level policymakers working toward systemic change.

Governmental agencies cannot remain satisfied only with the successes of their early collaborative efforts. We're facing that now. We're excited about what we've done so far, but now we're looking at a couple of other major sectors o t there and trying to figure out where they can fit. What about the private non-profits, who are interested in everything

I've been talking about today and who are serving children youth and families in a variety of ways? How do we bring them in? If we bring them into the governance structure at some point, will the collaborative effort fall from its own weight? What about a relationship with the private sector?

Bring in the True Experts

Finally, it's true that those who come together to collaborate must know a lot about children youth and families. But it's dangerous to rely on professional and political expertise alone. That's what the feasibility study showed us. We would have approached this differently if we'd just done it based on the professional thinking and expertise of those of us who've been working with children youth and families for our entire careers. To use a cliche, it has to be user-driven. You have to keep checking with the users, the youth and families that all of this is designed to help and serve. That's sometimes the most difficult thing for professionals and politicians to do, because if we go about this in an honest, open way, we've got to be prepared to hear answers we don't want to hear and respond to questions that may be different from those we would have formulated or phrased. But that's the only way we're going to get honest feedback that will make a reality of the promise: for radical institutional change so we can provide prevention-based services for the population we're interested in.

I'm hopeful. The judgments are not all in, but we have to continue to work in this area. If we do, we might just make a dramatic breakthrough in this country, and we might yet in our lifetimes have a carefully articulated, comprehensive child and family policy.

CHAPTER THREE

The Transitions of Children and Parents from Preschools to Public School Settings

Dr. Willie Epps presently serves as project director of the Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville Head Start Program. Prior to coming to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Epps held positions as an elementary teacher, elementary principal, assistant superintendent of instruction, federal program officer, college/university professor and administrator. He is the author of several publications in the areas of elementary education, reading, community education. He is the author of the training program Parents as Partner.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of the practical things we do to help our Head Start children make a successful transition to kindergarten. We judge our effectiveness by the product we put out there: we want children who exit our program to go on to graduate from high school, to go on to post-secondary education and to become productive citizens.

"Transition is not a theory or a philosophy, but a planned process."

When our kids leave to go into the public schools, I don't call it graduation day. I call it "moving up" day. That's a beautiful day, when we get all our parents taking all these pictures. As you well know, Head Start has been around for 27 years. When we did a follow-up study on our students we found one young man who has made a remarkable success of himself. I talked with him before coming here. Let me share his story with you.

The Child Who Almost Failed

The day Teddy walked into Miss Thompson's fifth grade class, she decided she did not like him: he was from the wrong side of the tracks, he was dirty and he smelled. Having seen his earlier school records, she was convinced that he never should have made it as far as the fifth grade, and she was determined that she would not promote him again unless he was ready — and she was sure he would not be.

But when Christmas came, something happened that made Miss Thompson see Teddy in a new light. While all the other children gave her brightly wrapped presents that had obviously been bought by their parents, her gift from Teddy was wrapped in a brown paper bag and tied with a piece of string. Inside was a half-empty 10-cent bottle of perfume and a rhinestone bracelet missing five stones. Both had obviously belonged to his mother, who had died a couple of years earlier. The rest of the class burst out laughing, but something about those gifts got to Miss Thompson. She finally *saw Teddy for the first time*. After all the children had gone home that afternoon, she asked the Lord's forgiveness for having wronged Teddy. If the Lord would forgive her, she said, she would make it up to Teddy, working with him one on one after Christmas. And sure enough, in January with his father's consent Teddy started staying after school to work with Miss Thompson. By April, Teddy no longer needed that extra attention, and come May, he had the second highest grade average in the whole fifth grade.

Teddy and his father moved away that summer. When she first heard from him again in a letter seven years later he told her he was about to graduate high school as class salutatorian. Four years later a second letter said he was about to graduate from college, number two in a class of 4000 with a major in microbiology. Seven years later she got a third letter telling her that he was now a practicing physician. He thanked her and invited her to his upcoming wedding because thanks in part to her, he had succeeded against all odds.

Elements of a Smooth Transition

Common among the kids in Head Start and Chapter One programs are the odds against them. They come from impoverished backgrounds, some from single parent families, some from dysfunctional families. But like Teddy, they just need some help. A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to talk to Teddy about his experience and the difficult transition he had from preschool into kindergarten. That discussion helped me clarify some points I want to share with you today. The first is that transition is not a theory or a philosophy, but a process — a planned process.

Some children make a smooth transition. They have confidence and self-esteem. More importantly, they have strong parental support. Others don't make the transition so well.

The Need for Continuity

Those children who make a smooth transition from preschool to public school have a lot of continuity — of structure, policy, and procedures and in classroom setting and context. And those who make a good transition usually have public school teachers who share the basic philosophy of the preschool program, including commitment to developmentally appropriate curriculum and student-initiated as opposed to teacher directed programs.

But many who leave developmentally appropriate preschool programs suffer from discontinuity because most kindergarten programs are driven by academics. Also, while preschool programs like Head Start offer student-centered activities, most kindergartens have teacher-centered curriculum.

To do away with the discontinuity we must address kindergarten teacher awareness. There are many kindergarten teachers who believe Head Start and other preschool programs are simply baby-sitting programs. We've got to dispel this myth, letting them know that Head Start is a comprehensive child development program that not only pays attention to kids' cognitive development but also to their physical development. Head Start provides nutrition, social services, and parental involvement training. We've got to get public school teachers and preschool teachers to start talking to each other.

Continued Parental Involvement Eases the Change

Parent involvement in the school is another important issue. For some reason, public school teachers do not make parents feel welcome. By contrast, Head Start mandates that parents participate — and they do. They also participate as volunteers. Public schools need to keep parents involved, and teachers need to identify how they can best volunteer in the school program.

We know for a fact that when parents are visible and show up, teachers pay more attention to their kids. We also know there's a direct correlation between parents being involved and their child's behavior. So it seems advantageous to the teacher that she make sure parents have opportunities to continue volunteering.

Don't tell me parents will not come out. They'll come out if you invite them. I know public schools don't have the same opportunity for selectivity that Head Start has, but there are ways to get parents involved even when you can't mandate it.

Nine years ago when we started our Head Start program, we found out that volunteers and parents in our classrooms were more of a hindrance than a help. So we said they could not come into our program unless they come through our special training program where we would teach them how to become an effective volunteer. Also, before they come into Southern Illinois University's Head Start program, they must attend an orientation. We have had 100 percent participation.

Health is another area where parental involvement is important. We have children coming into Head Start who have never started an immunization process. But we are spending an awful lot of money to make sure that when they leave the program they're immunized and healthy. So when our kids leave the program we want to make sure their records are transferred and health services are continued. And we want parents involved in this.

When Head Start takes kids to the doctor, we try to make sure the parent is present so she can hear what the doctor has to say. It's also important that the parent begin to depend on herself and start making the child's doctor or dental appointments herself. We try to empower our parents, making them self-sufficient enough to make sure their kids

get health and dental care without the public school having to do this. Along this line, we also insist that parents not just sign off on their child's Individual Education Plan, but participate in developing it and determining appropriate placement for their child.

Finally, still on the issue of health, one of the strongest components of the Head Start program is attending to the psychological problems of both children and their families when needed. And we need to continue those services in the public school setting.

Expectations Can Set the Stage for Success or Failure

Based on our follow-up and work with parents over the last nine years, let me tell you the number one reason parents *don't* get involved with their child's school. Would you participate in your child's school if you had been kicked out, pushed out or had dropped out in the seventh grade? Conversely, when we tracked our volunteers we found that they were parents who had experienced success in the public schools experience.

Now here's the problem: our parents are becoming younger and younger, some becoming parents too soon. The children are now attending the same school their parents attended, and the parents are finding that some of the same teachers and principals *they* had are still there. And these young parents still remember being talked down to. And they still remember the teachers who even on day one had already decided they would not pass a particular grade. So why would those same parents now be particularly enthusiastic about getting involved with that same school? Schools need to deal with this issue.

If some parents expect the worst of school, some teachers have their own negatives expectations — just like Miss Thompson. Back before we started focusing on transition and really communicating with the public schools, instead of going to kindergarten, a large number of our kids were being placed in something called a transition classroom. We had not known that the public school curriculum was being driven by academic requirements. And because our kids were being trained under the developmentally appropriate model, many could not pass standardized placement tests. So a significant number were being placed in that transition classroom. Now we're doing some of both: we're still teaching and doing things that are developmentally appropriate, but we're also giving kids more academic kinds of things.

And we're more careful to give teachers as much information as possible about our kids. Any information from placement tests we've given should be available to the public schools so they won't have to second guess the placement. So supported by a grant from the Danforth Foundation, we've worked with the St. Louis Public Schools, the St. Louis County Public Schools and the Metro East area to develop a two-page instrument that serves as a profile of our children.

Preschool and Kindergarten Teaching Strategies Differ

Also affecting a child's transition is the difference in teaching strategies between our preschool program and public school. Head Start kids initiate a lot of their own activities, and we believe in the language experience approach. I hear kindergarten teachers talking about the importance of a children's language experience, and our kids are coming into public school talking. Yet when we do follow-up at the public schools, we've heard some people say, "You know these [Head Start] kids can't sit down. They're moving all the time. And they talk so much."

Class Size a Factor

Putting kids into larger classes also hinders transition. At Head Start we have a ratio of one teacher to 10 students, and in most classes in our particular program we have 17 students and two teachers. We know that when our kids come into kindergarten classes of 20, 25 or 30 students with one teacher, the size of that class serves as a barrier to their successful transition. Wouldn't it help everyone, including that teacher, if the schools started training some volunteers to come work with them?

Preschools and Public Schools Need to Start Talking

As teachers and public school officials we need to do is develop a transition program for these youngsters. We need to decide how we're going to share responsibility, who's going to do what when, and who's going to be held accountable for it? And

Head Start and other preschool programs bear as much responsibility as the public school teachers to make sure we get together and share the responsibilities for transition.

To begin with there should be an interagency planning committee that includes public school personnel, preschool personnel, parents and representatives of other community agencies. We simply got people together in the same room and for the first time started talking to each other, and in the process they found out that we were really human beings.

The day we invited public school teachers over to Head Start they got the shock of their lives. The first thing they learned was that we don't use any commercial materials on our bulletin boards. All work displayed is student-made. We don't care how bad it is either; it's their's. The teachers also found that our kids do not have to duplicate other people's ideas. At Thanksgiving all turkeys do *not* have to be black; they can be purple or red — we don't care. It should be whatever the kid thinks it should be.

I have six centers serving 1150 children, and the teachers found out that they are all accredited by the National Association of Young Children. I'm not saying that that's the best measure of quality, but we do put it on our stationary and on all our signs.

We also started sharing workshop opportunities with the public schools. By talking, we found out that both we and the district were giving parent training sessions and that neither of us had enough resources to do as much training as we felt we needed. We round out that together we could stretch our dollars. It came out that we had a $13,000 literacy grant and the district had a $43,000 literacy grant. We found that 52 percent of our parents didn't have diplomas or GEDs. So why not pool the money? Now jointly we have established a family literacy center, and together we're going after more resources.

Selling the School to the Students

Before we take our kids over to the kindergartens, we make it a point to bring some of our ex-Head Start kids back to the center to talk to them. While working in recruitment at Southern Illinois University, I learned that the best way to recruit was to bring SIU students with me. Potential students didn't want to hear from Epps about why SIU was so great. They knew I didn't hang out at the student union or go to the parties. So at Head Start we bring former students back, and you'd be surprised at some of the things you hear them say to our kids: "Man, when you get over there you're on your own. There's no more family-style eating. You go to lunch, you're on your own. Man, you go out on that playground and you've got to fight for your own territory. Man, you ought to see the big building. You all got these little rooms over here but we got big rooms. We don't have to have our mother walking us to the bus any more. We walk on our own." This goes on and on and you'd be surprised at how effective these children are in making preschool kids aware of what the public school is like.

I talked to you earlier about the importance of keeping parents involved throughout the transition. Well, we were spending a lot of resources on training our parents, and after they had completed their training, they were working in the program as volunteer decision-makers. But we found that our parents weren't making the transition to public school either.

So with some funding from the Department of Health and Human Services we put together a program called "Becoming Partners." We surveyed 43 school districts in the Metro East area asking questions of both principals and kindergarten teachers. For example, we asked kindergarten teachers what kind of helpful information we should transfer to you? We also put together what we call a take-home folder. In it is all kinds of information about the particular kid. It's a way to market the child, to point out his strengths for his new teacher. That helps him be successful in kindergarten. The teachers also told us some specific things they wanted us to do with the parents. For example, they wanted us to make sure our parents prepare kids for this transition at home. During the summer, they said, some parents instill in the their kids a fear of kindergarten by saying things like, "You just wait until you get to Miss So-and-so. *She'll* take care of you. You *wait* until school starts." By the time the kids come to kindergarten, they're already frightened of Miss So-and-so.

Also, principals urged us to let parents know that they are responsible for making sure their kids are

at school every day, with their tools and ready to work. They also said to make sure parents know how a school works: who to see, what's the chain of command, how to communicate with school personnel. So, for example, we have three parent-teacher conferences a year for the parents to learn how to be active participants in their child's school life.

Four Modules for Parents

We've developed four required modules for our parents. One is on preparing your child for the transition. In it, we give parents all kinds of books on going to kindergarten, train them how to read those books to the kids, give them films, and ask them to work with their children over the summer so the kids won't lose the skills they've gained in Head Start.

A second module is on how to communicate with school staff. When the school starts talking about path reference, about norm reference, or about your child's percentile score, what are they really talking about? Someone said to me the other day, "Dr. Epps, you know my child is going to Harvard when she graduates. You know why? She's so smart she scored at the 24 percentile." I thought, "Oh my god, she's going *where*?"

Parents need definition of terms. "My child is in a compensatory program." What does that mean? They're on the phone bragging to their friends. "My child's in a compensatory program. You're child's not." So we put together a booklet about terms frequently used in the public schools.

Another module is about how schools work. I've had a lot of parents come and say, "You know, they make us sign in." They say, "Why do we have to sign in? It's *our* school." I say, "The reason you sign in is to protect the safety of your child." Parents didn't know that, and when they do they're usually satisfied. I also tell them when you're courteous to teachers, teachers are going to be courteous to your child.

A fourth module is on parents rights and responsibilities. Yes, it *is* the parents' responsibility to make sure their children are in school every day. But it's the *school's* responsibility to make sure that children learn something when they're there every day. It's also the parents' responsibility to make sure their children are well-behaved when they get to school. But it's the school's responsibility to ensure an orderly environment at school. And it's both the parents' and the teachers' responsibility to have high expectations of their children.

Setting the Tone for Success: Principals and Teachers

We know the principal is the key person at any school in setting the tone for our kids. It's the principal's responsibility to make sure there's a climate for learning, that expectations are known and articulated, and to make sure what's done in the classroom is developmentally appropriate. So once a year at the beginning of school, we bring together all the principals from the schools we feed into. We talk about getting their schools ready to receive our kids. We say we will guarantee that our kids are ready to learn when they get to you; we want you to guarantee that you're ready to receive them.

In 1960 the U.S. Office of Education conducted a research study to determine which approach worked best for teaching reading. They spent millions of dollars and found that in the final analysis, it doesn't matter which approach is used. The real difference in whether children learn to read is the teacher. The person who makes the real difference in whether these kids are going to be successful in public schools is their teacher, especially if there is also some parental support.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Look at Continuity Issues from Preschool to Early Primary Grades: Assessment and Evaluation

Dr. Samuel Meisels is a member of the faculty of the University of Michigan where he is a professor in the School of Education and a research scientist at the Center for Human Growth and Development. Meisels has published extensively in the fields of early childhood development, assessment, and special education and is co-editor of The Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention. *His current work includes a national, bilingual standardization of his developmental screening instrument, the Early Screening Inventory; a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, longitudinal study of extremely low birth weight infants; and a project devoted to designing alternative assessment instruments in kindergarten.*

Back in 1970 or so I was teaching kindergarten in Brookline, Massachusetts and doing some things that made people there very, very nervous. It was strange enough that I was male, especially in 1970 when there were not yet a lot of men working in early childhood education — so you can imagine what my interview with the personnel director was really about. Then, when a lot of rabbits and other things were running around loose in the classroom, the parents all wanted to come and talk to this strange male kindergarten teacher. The parents were all Harvard professors who wanted to know how their kids compared to other kids. After all, they knew how *they* compared to all *their* colleagues who lived in the next house and the next and the next. So they wanted to know how their kids were coming along too.

I wouldn't give them that. But in fact, at the time I was trying to figure out how we *could* assess, evaluate, and document a child's [educational] progress. Now, finally, I've come up with several [possible ways] to document what goes on in active, child-centered classrooms. And that's what I want to try to share with you today. I think these ideas can be helpful in letting families know what goes on in the classroom throughout preschool and up through grade three

"We need to adopt a new standard where instructional decisions are based on actual student performance rather than standardized test data. As we do, we'll be opening school doors for children."

Early Childhood Testing: An Emotional Issue

To start, I want to talk about how we can assess early childhood education differently from the traditional approach. I'm going to show you an ad that appeared for some time in *Young Children* and many other magazines and journals. It's an ad for CTN MacMillian-McGraw Hill, which puts out the California Achievement Test. The most widely used K-12 assessment in every known galaxy, the CAT is also one of the most nefarious standardized, whole-group, objectively scored K-12 tests available. There are some 12 million CAT administrations every year in this country.

I want to spend a minute to tell you about this ad because it helps give a context for why we need assessment alternatives. Introducing a new assessment called the Early Childhood System, the ad asks, "How do you really feel about early childhood testing?"

The ad says, "Anyone who has ever administered a typical early childhood test or taken one knows the feeling: the fears, the tears, and the frustration But now there's a better way." And the better way is their way. Frankly, I have never seen this assessment. It may be the best thing that has ever happened to the world, but that's not my point. My point is to show you how one of the world's biggest test manufacturers tries to market assessment to early childhood educators. It's not the test I'm looking at here but how they

represent it. The ad says they've developed this early childhood system, and "most importantly, it's completely non-threatening to children."

So now they are beginning to tell us something about their perception of what tests are like. They say this new test will prove that an assessment program needn't be oppressive in order to be effective. In fact, it says, this test is so non-oppressive that "it's one for all and all for fun." It goes so far as to say, "With classroom fun like this who needs recess?" Certainly [the person who wrote this ad] can't imagine what *he'd* rather do than take a test like that himself.

So there are lots of strong feelings out there about assessments. Here's another example, an article from the *Milwaukee Journal* with the headline, "Rallys Offer Pupils Tips for Surviving Tests." The article, about something called the test-buster or test-bester program, quotes the guidance counselor at this elementary school saying that the nice thing about the program is that "it's totally unrelated to the test itself. We're dealing with the concept of taking a test, not content. It really brings a lot of spirit and pride to the school." At the top is a picture of a little girl watching cheerleaders leading the pep rally. The caption reads, "First grader Monica Rinder, six, is awed by a skit during a pep rally on test taking skills at the school." I suspect she truly is awed: she probably can't figure out what the hell is going on at school where *this* is what she's supposed to be doing. It's a little like the cartoon that shows an employer telling a prospective employee, "Your aptitude test shows that after 20 years of schooling you're skilled at just one thing — taking tests."

Now that is a problem, right? And it's not unrelated to the work you do. Here's an article I noticed in the *New York Times* headlined, "Students Subvert Own Scores" — like psychometric hari-kari. This happened in Torrance, California a year or two ago when seniors at a top-performing high school in this Los Angeles suburb sabotaged their answers on an annual test that measures schools' academic quality. It says in one year the reading scores there dropped from the 85th percentile to the 51st percentile and the math scores from the 95th to the 71st percentile. The paper quotes the student body president saying the seniors became disgruntled when teachers interrupted classes to prepare them for the test and when administrators visited classes to stress the importance of doing well on it. So they basically sabotaged the test.

Test Preparation Starts Very Young

Is there this same focus on test preparation in early childhood? You bet there is. Here is [an ad] for a program for "developing beginning test taking skills," which says, "The company has met an important and current need. We proudly introduce a uniquely innovative program to help young children learn one of the most important sets of skills they need: test taking, a curriculum must in today's schools." And for about $130 or $140 you can buy both unit one and unit two. Unit one is learning basic testing vocabulary, like circle, bubble and oval. Unit two is about how to locate on the test page — top, bottom, left, right, top-left, top-right — and all the other things you need to know to make it through whole-group, objectively scored, standardized testing.

Here's another example. A friend sent me a copy of this book: *First Grade Takes a Test*, illustrated by Lillian Hoban, a remarkably talented children's illustrator. But she just drew the pictures. She didn't write it, so we won't blame her for that. Let me read you a couple of pages: "A lady from the principal's office came to the first grade. She had a big pile of papers with little boxes all over them. She smiled at the first grade. 'We have some tests for you,' she said. 'Oh good,' says Anna Maria. 'Now we can find out how smart we are.' "

And then, jumping ahead, " Sammy read, 'What do firemen do? Make bread? Put out fires? Sing?' He poked Willie. 'Firemen get your head out when it's stuck,' he said. 'My uncle had his head stuck in a big pipe and the firemen came and got it out.' But none of the boxes said that."

Of course, the fact is that nowadays, I'm sure, firemen do make bread, put out fires *and* sing — as well as getting someone' head out of a big pipe if it were stuck. But it doesn't say that on the test. So at a very early point in children's school careers we begin to teach them that they have to learn response sets. We begin to teach them that some answers are plausible but incorrect and that they need to figure out what the correct answers are. Not only do we *teach* to the test, we begin to teach kids how to *learn* to the test — and that has a significant impact on what we can hope for from our schools these days.

The Business of Testing

Standardized testing is very big business in the United States. According to data from the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy, when you total both direct and indirect costs and the amount of time given over to standardized test-taking and giving, between $700 and $900 million is spent annually in the United States. When you make that kind of investment, without question you're going to become committed to it.

We have, of course, an education president today, right? And he has national educational goals. Donna Foglia and I are on the resource panel for the first goal, which is that all children be ready to learn when they enter school. We told them that all children are ready to learn when they're born and that this is really not where we ought to be putting our attention. But we have politicians who are running for office based on test scores. This cartoon really sums some of it up. What it shows is this monster attacking a city. As the entire populace flees, one person up in front says, "Just when citywide reading scores were edging up."

High Stakes Testing

Not all tests are [problematic], just the high stakes tests: those that are directly linked to decisions regarding promotion or retention; that are used for evaluating or rewarding teachers or administrators; that affect the allocation of resources to school districts; and that result in changes in the curriculum.

The SAT is the granddaddy of all high stakes tests. But the way in which it's used today isn't how it was designed to be used in 1928. It was supposed to provide supplementary information for college admissions counselors because there was so much diversity in curriculum across the country, and people wanted to have at least one common measure. It was meant to be supplementary, but today it has taken over, and in some cases admission decisions are based entirely on the SAT.

If you have low test scores, you're going to have a great deal of trouble getting admitted to college. If you have low Graduate Record Exams (GRE) scores, it's going to be difficult for you to get admitted to my university, in part because our departments are compared to each other by their [respective] mean GRE scores. The allocation of fellowship money is pegged to that too.

I'll give you another example of high stakes testing, this time [in the earlier years]. This article from my local Ann Arbor newspaper is headlined, "State's New Reading Test Revolutionizes Teaching." It says, "A reading revolution is underway. Scores are in from Michigan's new standardized reading tests, and educators say they symbolize a profound change in the way the schools teach the first of the three Rs." The language arts coordinator is quoted saying, "It'll change reading instruction. It's already begun in the classroom." What's wrong with this? What's wrong is that we're saying assessment will change instruction rather than instruction changing assessment.

I think 46 of the 50 states now have some form of minimum competency testing at some point, and often at many points. In Michigan, it's the Michigan Education Assessment Program — the MEAP — and testing takes place in 4th, 7th and 10th grade. Although it doesn't affect individual kids, it does have a lot of impact. My son attends an alternative public high school in Ann Arbor and when he was in 10th grade and about to take the MEAP, he came home one night and said, "Tomorrow is the MEAP, and I and my friends are just going to randomly mark the score sheet. I know all about standardized tests from you, Dad, and I know this doesn't mean a thing. It's not going to affect me at all, so I'm just going to do this."

I said, "You're right that it doesn't really have any effect on you directly, but it could have a major effect on your school and even on the district if a lot of kids did the same thing." This is a weirdo alternative public high school he attends, and they're always doing these kinds of strange things. And that's also why they have to keep their scores up. Because if they don't, people could say, "This school isn't doing its job because in comparison to other high schools, these scores have gone down." So while the scores may have very little or no impact instructionally, they have a major impact outside the classroom in terms of community perceptions. They also affect real estate values. If you looked at the middle pages of our local paper, you'd find that they provide the ranking of the [MEAP] scores for all the cities in our county. The real estate agencies look at these and will say, for example, you don't want to buy a house in Dexter,

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you should buy it in Ann Arbor because they were six-tenths of a point higher in the 4th grade MEAP.

The testing can effect what goes on in the classroom as well. About a year ago a colleague and I were starting to do some work on assessment alternatives, and we visited a principal. We were talking to her about using assessment alternatives in kindergarten and she said, "Well, you know we begin to prepare for the MEAP in kindergarten." I said, "Gee, I thought it was first administered in fourth grade." "Oh yes," she said, "it's first administered in fourth grade, but we begin to prepare for it as soon as kids come to school."

The Academic Trickle Down Theory

Academic trickle-down is what we call it when teachers' decisions about curriculum are influenced by pressure for the students to perform well in the next grade level — pressure that originates with the performance standards implied by standardized tests. Standardized testing not only affects what teachers will do, but what parents will do, as brought out in this little cartoon in which a storekeeper holds up a toy and says to the mother of a preschooler, "Two months with this and they blow their preschool entrance exams right out of the water."

There can also be a very strong element of teaching to the test. We call this measurement-driven instruction, in which testing programs result in a narrowing of the curriculum, a concentration on skills most related to the test, constraint on the creativity and flexibility of teachers, and the demeaning of teachers' professional judgment.

I want to show you some specific items that are on some of the most widely used whole-group, objectively scored, standardized assessments so we can see what measurement-driven instruction would look like in relation to these kinds of assessments. The example I'm using is the California Achievement Test. The context is its use in the state of Georgia in 1968 through 1988 when they decided to administer it as part of what they called the Quality Basic Education Act. Around 1986 the Georgia legislature decided it wanted its state education to look better nationally and that one way to achieve that goal was to impose what is called "promotional gates" testing at first and third grade. A child would enter kindergarten and then — in order to go on to first grade — have to pass a promotional gates test: some kind of benchmark exit test. If the child did not pass, he would be retained — flunked.

After that child moved to first grade, he would pass on to second and then third, where there would be another promotional gates test. It might be that some children would reach fourth grade only after seven years in school. There's something to be said about this system, but nothing very good.

As an academic who has studied this, I can't resist telling you about Georgia, but I must also tell you that Georgia's experience with promotional gates testing was so bad that it no longer uses it.

Does Standardization Really Exist?

It is a myth that such instruments are standardized. They have been standardized, but it doesn't mean you're getting standard scores each time they are administered, because there are so many other factors that go into this.

Scores can go up without commensurate gain in achievement due to measurement-driven instruction. They can also go down because of the way the test is administered. In fact, people have studied the administration of whole-group assessments in early childhood and found some very predictable but unusual things. Kenneth Wodtke from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, studying the administration of the Metropolitan in kindergartens, found a lot of variations in testing practices because teachers are the ones administering it. There would be minor grammatical variations, for example. If I were to make a mistake reading the instructions, which is very easy to do, kids' responses would be different and could be counted off as a result.

There would also be significant procedural variations. Sometimes teachers would forget to give the pre-test, and if you don't give the pre-test, then you haven't taught the child how to take the test. So again, you can expect some significant group differences as a result. Unauthorized item repetition is another factor. Sometimes you're not allowed to repeat the items if kids don't get it the first time. But a teacher is a teacher, and some are going to repeat it anyway. A teacher may also cue correct answers. On the other hand, the kid at the

back of the room who is always a pain in the neck and always making trouble may ask, "What was that again?" And the teacher may look back there and say, "Bobby, you never listen." And if you say something like that, it's likely to have an effect on how kids do.

And what are the kids doing through all of this? Some were copying or calling out answers; one child helps another; they don't pay attention; they get out of their seats; they bump each other on the head — just the sort of things you'd expect when 25 or more kids are sitting down and taking a whole-group, objectively scored assessment in this fashion.

It is also a myth that they are telling us very much about achievement. Here's an example of a test question from one standardized test. You're given 15 seconds to do the item. I'll read verbatim the instructions: "Cross out the odd number in the second triangle, the biggest number that is in a square, and the number in a circle before 12. Do it now." Listen to this next one, for which you also have 15 seconds: "Put a circle around the animal, a line under the thing the animal lays, an X on the tool and draw a line to connect the things that are worn. The line cannot touch any other object. Do it now."

I suggest these are not necessary valid indicators of what children know. I think they are telling us much more about a response to a very novel situation, and often not much more than that. They certainly cannot possibly be dealing with the breadth of curriculum that takes place in preschool through grade three

Rejecting Retention

I wrote a brief paper about myths of America's kindergartens. I listed four. One was that raising the school entry age produces smarter kindergarten classes. The second is that if kids aren't ready for first grade, you do them a favor by holding them back. The third is that immature kids or slow learners can benefit from two years of kindergarten. That has not been substantiated. And the fourth is that parents can help their children get ahead in school by holding them out in kindergarten until age six. That also has no substantiation whatsoever.

I'm not going to discuss these myths in detail. But I want to deal with the second one because it's so closely related to one of the [common and] unintended consequences of standardized tests. Research has shown that children retained in grade perform more poorly in future academic work and that many end up dropping out of school altogether. Retention has been shown to have harmful effects on both the socio-emotional development and self-esteem of kindergartners. But a great deal of retention takes place in early elementary and early childhood — much more so than we recognize. It's very hard to get these data at any level and almost impossible to get statewide data in kindergarten. The figures I have for the first grade retention rates in nine southern states are a couple of years old, but I don't think they've changed very much. They show a range: five percent of first graders being held back in Kentucky; 7.8 percent in Maryland; 10 in Texas; 13.6 in Mississippi; and 14 in Louisiana.

With all of this, one has to ask: is flunking a grade ever for a pupil's own good? Lorrie Shepard, from the University of Colorado at Boulder, has reported research showing that students rank grade retention as the third most feared life event after the death of a parent and blindness. And the research I've seen shows that is not an exaggeration.

I want to share with you just briefly some analysis I've done of the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988. The NELS study was a nationally representative study of eighth graders in the U.S. It also collected data on school histories and on the course of education these students had had up until eighth grade. There was a direct assessment of children's achievements, of their self-concept, of their sense of locus of control. Data were collected from parents, from teachers, from administrators. It was very comprehensive.

I and my colleagues at the University of Michigan re-analyzed the data set to use just the white, black and Hispanic public school students, which constituted 16,412 students. Using that data set, we found that nearly one in five, or 18.2 percent, of these kids had been retained at least once in K-8. This gives you a picture of how frequently retention take place in elementary school. Looking further, we found some very disturbing things. We found, for example, that there were major race and social class differences in the retention rates: 27.4 percent of the black students and 23.5 of the Hispanic students had been held back as contrasted to 16 percent of the white students. And 31.3 percent of the retainees were from the lowest

socioeconomic status quartile as contrasted with 8.5 percent from the highest quartile.

Some argue that this kind of tracking helps those kids. But the comparison often made is the same-grade comparison, in which the retained kids are a year older and have had an extra year of school as compared to the non-retainees. What we found was that retainees spent more time in remedial classes; had lower grades and lower scores on reading, math and science achievement; felt less control of their environment; and, showed less positive self-concept. In looking at these data, which are analyzed in very comprehensive ways, we found that retention conferred no advantage whatsoever on those kids, that they were behind and they stayed behind. Furthermore, we found that the human cost to those kids was very very great.

Retention is one of the few topics in which there is actually a great deal of unanimity in the research. This has moved some states and cities to think about outlawing retention altogether. But it remains a very political issue. In Texas, for example, the state board in August 1990 voted to bar retention for pupils in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. By April 1991 they weren't so sure any more: the board softened the rules on retention before first grade.

If you are retained, you're going to be at least a year too old for grade, and age-grade correspondence is the single most sensitive indicator of dropout potential in urban settings. In Detroit, for example, if you are one year too old for grade at 9th grade, that is a year older than the kids who have never been retained, your chance of graduating is half that of someone who has not been retained.

The evidence on retention seems quite clear to me, and unfortunately, retention is very closely tied to the use of standardized assessments.

Does Social Promotion Have to be the Only Alternative?

But if you don't like retention, people will say to me, then you must be proposing social promotion, which is the promotion of students to the next grade level not because of their academic mastery or competence but in order to keep age cohorts together or to enhance individual self-esteem or group cohesiveness. From my point of view there's nothing wrong with those kinds of goals. But the issue need not be presented in such stark contrast. We do not need to think of retention versus social promotion. Between them is a huge universe of low-cost things to do to avoid the entire dilemma of having to choose. Let's focus on preventing failure while the kids are with their age cohorts.

I'm going to move very rapidly through some of the alternatives. They're very well-known: smaller class size; greater availability of classroom aides; more communication between home and school through kids' first three to four school years; use of more small group focus instructional programs; availability of individual tutoring when needed; increased materials and resources throughout the first few years of school; cross-age tutoring and instructional grouping K-3; broadening the approach to teaching academic skills; adopting unified developmental curricula; and supporting teachers' curriculum innovations.

After all of the negative things I've said, one has to ask, should we test young children at all? There is both a yes and a no answer. The no is for standardized, whole-group, objectively scored achievement tests in preschool through third grade I see no justification, at least for the kinds of achievements tests I've been talking about. But the other answer is yes, we certainly we need to test kids as part of a diagnostic process to learn more about their strengths and weaknesses.

We need to be open to assessment because it's integral to teaching. We don't teach well if we're not constantly engaged in a systematic feedback process. And that, in part, means having an assessment program.

The Work Sampling System

The assessment approach I would suggest is something I and my colleagues are calling a work sampling system. We're developing it for use in preschool through third grade. It's now being tested out in many classrooms, so we're learning more about it, developing new pieces of it, and finding out more about its effectiveness all the time.

Basically it comes down to using some ideas that have been around for a long time, but perhaps structuring them a little differently. We're talking about using system of developmental checklists, portfolios, and summative teacher reports. The

checklists indicate children's strengths and weaknesses while helping to create goals for portfolios while the portfolios inform teachers about the quality of children's work as documented in the checklists. The summative report is a year-end report that summarizes the checklist and portfolios and translates them into understood and easily recorded data about child performance.

The first segment of the assessment consists of criterion-referenced checklists designed to chart the progress of individual children in widely varied performance areas, including gross and fine motor skills, expressive and receptive language, reasoning and cognition, and socio-emotional adaptation. The checklist is done at least three times during the year. The type of performances we're looking for will certainly be different over time. So the checklists at each point up through third grade will be different, but the constructs and the concepts are not different and the functions and purpose are not different. The purpose is to assist teachers in observing and documenting children's skills and accomplishments — in other words, to look authentically at children's performance. The second purpose is to help teachers keep track of what individual children know and can do and the third, to assist teachers in planning developmentally appropriate classroom experiences throughout the year. Those are very comprehensive goals for an assessment system.

There are over 60 items on the kindergarten checklist and each is in a different domain — measurement, for example. Within each domain are a number of sub-areas, and within each sub-area are items connected to one another in terms of increasing developmental complexity. In a sub-area of measurement, for example, is an item asking whether the child has been appropriately using the terms "bigger," "smaller" and "more than" to describe people and objects. A teacher observes this in her classroom, and then at three times — fall, winter or spring — will indicate what a child is doing, assessing in terms of "not yet," "sometimes," and "often."

When a teacher completes this for every kid in her classroom across all of the developmental domains throughout the year, she will truly be documenting what's going on in her classroom. You can know that as an aggregate and most importantly, you can look at it for an individual child. This is not meant to show what children are doing in relationship to one another but the child's individual progress. In that sense it comes out of a criterion reference traditional and also out of the tradition of comparing one child against himself or herself over time

Of course you can misuse any assessment. This one could be misused to say who has the most "oftens" checked on their list, but that's clearly not what we intend. The items we've selected for the checklist are not meant to be splinter skills; they're meant to be integral to the development of kids or, as we get further up in the grades, to the development of a domain of knowledge. Teachers need to be better observers in order to use this approach, and our teacher training in part focuses on improving and enhancing their observational skills.

The Role of Portfolios

This one element of the assessment looks at the frequency with which kids do certain things. Yet you can easily imagine that two different children in a classroom could have almost identical checklists because they do the same things roughly the same amount of time. Yet they can still be very different kids. The quality of their work could be very different. So we also need to incorporate a qualitative aspect in the assessment, and that's why we use portfolios. A portfolio is a compilation of a student's work that displays its range provides both teacher and parents with a sense of accomplishment, affords the teacher critically important information about a student's strengths and weaknesses, and keeps track of a curriculum's scope and sequence. A portfolio is compiled over time.

Portfolios have become very popular, and this is dangerous because we know in education that whenever something becomes very popular it quickly becomes a fad and may be misused. So we've worked hard to try to structure this.

What's revealed in a portfolio is the *process* of instruction. A portfolio contains some of the products of instruction, certainly, but those products are also elements of the instructional process of the classroom experience. In this sense, if you are also using it for assessment, then we have come very close to the point of being able to merge instruction and assessment. Think about a parent-teacher conference where you could sit down and show parents their child's work in different areas and across time and compare it all to a checklist.

It makes progress clear to children as well, making it possible for them to participate in assessing their own work. We have one first grade teacher who has three folders for every single child in her class: one is marked hard, one easy, and one fun. At the end of a period of time she asks the children to select a piece of their work to put into each of the folders. Now I have a little trouble with those particular three categories because what's hard, what's easy, and what's fun are not always different from each other. But when kids look back at what was hard for them at one time they might find that it's now easy. In this way they participate in the assessment themselves. As kids get older they can do much more of this type of metacognitive assessment. And that, I think, is almost revolutionary in terms of assessment.

Of course all this helps us keep track of children's individual progress and helps form the basis for evaluating the quality of a child's overall performance. We don't just stick anything and everything in portfolios because you would just end up with a raft of paper that is basically information overload. We are really trying to control it. We're asking teachers to collect things and date them across three time periods. Core items are one or two examples of repeated work common to all children in each domain that are collected at least three times during the year, while other items allow for much more individualization. We've just begun this kind of structured portfolio collection.

There are lots of photographs in kindergarten portfolios. We get the Polaroid company to come out and do a workshop for our teachers, and Polaroid gives everybody a free camera. You can't use their expensive film if you don't have a camera so they're really generous with their cameras. You've got to use cameras because so much of what goes on in early elementary school doesn't fit on an 8-1/2 X 11 inch sheet of paper. So there might be a photograph of a child sawing wood at the work bench. Maybe it's not a big deal in general, but maybe it's a very big deal for this particular child. Here a picture of kids in a book corner. It could be very common, or it could be very uncommon, if it's taken a long time for one of these kids to get involved in books. The portfolio may include examples of writing, a list of books read aloud to one particular child, or a tempera painting. The power of this kind of assessment just simply can't be underestimated. It carries us way beyond these very abstract kinds of items I showed you before and brings us into what children and teachers are *doing* in classrooms.

Summing It Up

It's wonderful that we can use checklists to document what children are doing and that we can demonstrate what they're doing with their portfolio, but we still need to have a way of summarizing all that information. This brings us to the last piece of the system — the teacher report form, which is a profile completed on each child at the end of the school year. It's based on teacher observation, student performance as recorded on the developmental checklist, and an evaluation of the student's portfolio. The report reflects specific criteria and helps to record, summarize, and aggregate information about the child.

We're still doing preliminary work on this last piece and still altering it. The current cover page, using kindergarten as an example, shows the five domains of fine motor, gross motor, concept/number, language/literacy and personal social development for which there are five achievement levels noted, ranging from low to high. Associated with this will be rating scales very specifically keyed to what's on the checklists and in the portfolios, but still very teacher-friendly. Teachers will be able to look at the rating scales and look back to find the evidence on the checklists or in the portfolios. But they will also be able to write comments when, perhaps, they have observed some type of progress — even though it wasn't recorded in the other two parts of the system. And we're going to include a line about amount of progress made over the year.

Let me leave you with a final thought.

Tests do not have magical powers. No test in and of itself has any power. They are only powerful to the extent that we transfer to them our power, our control of decisions regarding what is to be taught, what is to be learned, who is to be promoted, and what we actually think about young children. We need to adopt a new standard, one where instructional decisions and documentation of accountability are based on actual student performance and on teacher's structured observations rather than on standardized test data. As we move in this direction we will be opening school doors for children.

CHAPTER FIVE

School Readiness and Transition to School: The Current Debate

Donna B. Foglia is a full-time kindergarten teacher in the Evergreen School District. While in this position, she has served as a member of the California State Department of Education's School Readiness Task Force and was a major contributor to its nationally acclaimed report, "Ready or Not: Here They Come". In 1989, Foglia was named at the Northern California Kindergarten Conference as "the person who had the greatest influence on kindergarten education" during that year. Finally, with Sam Meisels and others she has recently served on the Resource Group on School Readiness, which was convened by the National Education Goals Panel.

Dr. John R. Bergan is Professor of Educational Psychology and Director of the Center for Educational Evaluation and Measurement at the University of Arizona. He is also President of Assessment Technology Incorporated. He is the author of over 70 publications including books, chapters, and journal articles focusing on measurement and consultation-based interventions related to the cognitive and social development of young children.

DONNA B. FOGLIA

I'd like to make some comments in three different areas. The first concerns the California report, "Here They Come, Ready or Not." The report's eighth recommendation says that assessment methods for children in early programs must be drastically altered. The Task Force was very clear in that position. Children are entitled to enter school when they are the legal age. Assessment procedures should not be used to exclude children from school or to track them into transitional or special classes.

This has been a very powerful document in our state and one we're very proud of. It has resulted in change in school districts in California and throughout the nation. The Task Force was very concerned about the issue of assessment and that it be individualized and ongoing as part of the daily program. It should be used for planning and program evaluation rather than for placement purposes. So again, we emphasized moving away from standardized tests that can so often label and stigmatize young children.

The First National Goal: Readiness to Learn

I would like to make reference to the national panel. I think there's been a lot of confusion about what the first national goal really means. It's an awesome goal and one that can inspire a lot of controversy in conversation. I know you have some information regarding the first goal, but I would like to also recommend a document that just came out from ERIC that gives you excellent background and information on all six national goals.

"Many times the necessary training and backup are not available for those making changes in their individual classrooms."

We had a very distinguished panel, and I was certainly honored to serve on it. It was really gratifying to me as a classroom practitioner that the panel had a clear consensus that no assessment be devised that would label, stigmatize or classify any individual child or group of children or exclude children from school. I think that was one of the biggest concerns everyone had. Are we talking about a national assessment that would deem whether or not children were ready for school? That is absolutely not what we are talking about.

The panel sees the development of an assessment system to advance the holistic definition of what it means to be ready to learn. It was gratifying to learn

that every single member of that panel was concerned about the whole child. Our purpose was to create a data base to assist the nation in providing services for young children and to inform public policy. Again, we're talking about assessment of dimensions of early learning and development that describe the whole child.

The Teacher's Responsibility: Helping Each Child Succeed

The third and certainly most important hat I wear is that of the every day classroom teacher. I've been in the classroom for about 30 years. Every year it's a challenge, and it becomes more and more challenging. I have 30 children in my classroom, and many of them have not gone to preschool. We're finding in California and, I think, nationwide that we're seeing more children who have not had the opportunity for various reasons to attend a preschool. I also have children who have been held out a year. So like many of you who are teachers, I have a tremendous range of abilities and developmental levels.

How can I help each one of those children? Well certainly if I administered a readiness test at the beginning of the year, I could probably deem many of those children unready and I could exclude them. But this is not in the best interest of children. I believe that every child in my classroom is ready for school, is ready to be in a learning environment. And I believe that it's my responsibility as a classroom teacher to structure that environment to give every child an opportunity to succeed. And part of my responsibility as a classroom teacher, as a facilitator in the classroom, is to be accountable for what my children learn, to assess my children. That assessment is not done through standardized testing but through a variety of means — the teacher observation, the checklist, parental input — the kind of assessment that we feel is meaningful for young children.

Barriers to Assessment Change

Since the release of the state document "Here They Come, Ready or Not," we've seen districts making changes regarding assessment procedures. We've seen these change occur even with great barriers before us. One of these barriers is large class size. Kindergartens usually run 30 to 33, and many times, as in my case, a colleague shares the room with you. But many kindergarten teachers teach alone, and they have no aide. So these considerations need to be taken into account when we talk about how to assess young children.

The myths Sam Meisels mentioned exist in every school district in every community. And they're myths we have to deal with when we talk about how to assess young children. It's fine to stand up here and talk about standardized assessment versus portfolios and all the other kinds of appropriate assessments that we want to see instituted. But we also know that changing a procedure is very slow, it's a process, it's often very painful and often very threatening to those who are in the process of changing. So I think that whatever we discuss at this conference in the area of assessment, we need to keep in mind that we have to help those people who are making the changes.

We have to have first of all a district commitment. Without a district commitment for change, an individual teacher cannot do it alone. I commend my district, Evergreen District in the San Jose area, for making a commitment to change their first grade assessment. They decided that was a good project for me to undertake, so now I'm the chair of that assessment committee. And it's tough. We're going through a process. And we've had many negative comments from teachers. We're trying to say, "This is a process, it takes time." But it can be very discouraging. So those of you who are in districts undergoing that kind of change, don't get discouraged.

Educating the Community on Good Child Development Principles

But you have to have that district commitment and the commitment of your school board. You need the buy-in on the part of your community and your parents. So we come right back to the issue of good child development principles that your district, school board, parents, and community need to be knowledgeable about or you're not going to get very far in making changes in assessments.

One of the greatest needs is for staff development and training for teachers. We see many instances where the process of change begins but the training, the backup system, is not there for those making the change in their individual classrooms.

So we need staff development to help us make those changes.

I also think that it's incumbent on colleges and universities to offer more courses in child development. We're seeing this happen, but unfortunately we're also seeing some of these courses being eliminated instead of furthered. In all of my education I've never had a course in how to observe children. And this is a course that should be included, either at the college level or in the school district.

Another thing I feel very strongly about and that is lacking in most every school district is the communication and the articulation between the child development programs, the preschools, and the formal school situation. This is certainly an issue at this conference. How can we have better communication and articulation? Right now it's almost nonexistent in many districts. I feel it's nonexistent in my district, and it's something we're working toward.

A Critical Need: Help for Those in the Trenches

So these are all issues we need to consider as we're talking about assessment. And we can compare standardized tests versus alternative assessments, but let's not forget those people who are there in the trenches, who are in the classrooms every day and who are going to administer whatever kind of test. Let's help them in making the changes and in making the changes credible. Because if they aren't credible, we will go right back to the standardized tests. The alternative instructional strategies are viable avenues for us to use and will help facilitate assessment changes. And I feel that this conference will further that dialogue and help us in looking at the help need by the classroom teacher, the committee in the district, the school board and all of the other people involved.

DR. JOHN R. BERGAN

I feel highly honored at being asked to come speak to this group. However, I feel some trepidation in approaching this task. More specifically, I think that anyone who takes it upon himself to talk to a group of educators about testing, even if you call it assessment, needs a bullet-proof vest and perhaps a plexiglass shield in front of the podium. I think we all owe Sam a great debt for his courage and ingenuity in making it clear to early childhood educators that assessment can make a useful contribution in our work, and his fine presentation this morning certainly can attest to that.

The Problem of Measuring Ability

In my five minutes here, I've got one point to make: One major concern of educators, policymakers and the public at large with respect to test results is the measurement of abilities acquired through instruction. Here I'll give you a quote from Mehrens and Kaminski, writing in *Issues in Measurement* in 1989: "Educators and the public often do not wish to make inferences just about the specific content that has been taught. For example, if parents wish to infer how well their children will do in another school next year, they need to infer to a general domain, not to the narrow and perhaps idiosyncratic domain of a single teacher's immediate objectives."

Now typically in the past we have relied on norm-referenced assessment instruments to solve these problems for us. Unfortunately these instruments have caused mischief, and Sam has pointed out some of the mischief that can be created for children. But actually, as I'm sure you're aware, it goes to teachers as well. Tom Haladyna and his colleagues at Arizona State write about this: "In high stakes testing many school personnel have an opportunity to optimize their students' performance without necessarily increasing achievement, although most educators who engage in what we have called unethical preparation and administration practices probably do not consider these activities as cheating, it is clear that the result is the same: polluted test scores."

So we have guilt and pollution. What more could you possibly ask? Well, there is more. In Arizona we have crime and punishment as well. Here I will take literary license with a quote from Mary Lee Smith's

recent article in the *American Educational Research Journal*. This is a quote from the *Arizona Republic*: "One of two things apparently has been going on in Polly Victim's second grade classroom at the "We're Better Than Average" primary school. Either Victim's teaching has been so superb that her pupils have posted fantastically high scores on the annual Iowa Test of Basic Skills or Victim has cheated. The state Department of Education suspects the latter, and has taken the unprecedented step of filing a complaint of teacher misconduct against Victim. Victim, who has denied wrongdoing, could face penalties ranging from a reprimand to a loss of her teaching certificate." Enter frustration and rejection.

So Mary Lee Smith goes on: "Preserving the integrity of the inference from indicator to construct may be of primary concern and interest to psychometricians, but it matters much less to school systems or teachers trying to survive in a political world that demands high scores. To chastise teachers for unethical behavior or for polluting the inference from an achievement test to the underlying construct of achievement is to miss a critical point: The teachers already view the indicator as polluted. Our extensive contact with teachers in this study and close analysis of their beliefs about testing led us to conclude that teachers see fundamental discrepancies between true educational attainment and information conveyed by test indicators. As one teacher commented, "This testing is all such a game, and we're not the winners."

What Validity Studies Say About Standardized Tests

Unfortunately, going along with that we have people who engage in validity studies about tests. You've seen Sam Meisels' slides and you've seen the ridiculously of some aspects of standardized testing. But against that backdrop there is a continuing set of studies that examine the validity of these indicators. And the fact is that these validity studies have rather good things to say about a test. For example, here's one from the SAT which was published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1990: "Over 1,000 mathematically precocious children identified through SAT scores in the 7th and 8th grader were studied. Ninety percent of these children entered college. Over three times the rate of the general population graduated. Moreover, they completed college with outstanding academic records. Nearly half graduated in the top 10 percent of their class; nearly half of the graduates continued their education beyond college."

These authors go on to say, "Individuals classified as having high ability solely on the basis of high SAT scores at age 12 will, with very high probability, perform well academically during the subsequent decade. Moreover, self-report data suggest that these students participate in activities that can lead to creative adult achievement in the sciences. The SAT has been attacked with regards to its validity, usefulness, and faimess to various ethnic and sex groups. Nonetheless, its predictive value for identifying at age 12 future scientists is quite remarkable. Fifty-two percent of all males and 44 percent of all female students were pursuing scientific medical careers 10 years after taking the SAT."

So this is the kind of thing that teachers have to face. I had one colleague in my institution who said, "I wish these tests would just go away." But they're not going to.

It gets worse. Here's something written by Stephen Ceci within the last month in *Developmental Psychology*. This is about IQ tests: "Although it takes little more than 90 minutes to administer, an IQ test is alleged to capture much of what is important and stable about an individual's academic, social, and occupational behavior. In addition to their well-documented prediction of school grades, IQ scores have been reported to have impressive validity coefficients for predicting everything from mental health and criminality to marital dissolution and job performance. For example, IQ scores have been shown to predict postal workers' speed and accuracy of sorting mail by zip codes, military recruits' ability to steer a Bradley tank through an obstacle course, mechanics' ability to repair engines, and many other real world endeavors. Moreover, IQ has been touted as a *better* predictor of such accomplishments than any other measure that has been studied thus far.

Hunter and Hunter estimate that if the city of Philadelphia were to randomly choose entry level police officers instead of using its cognitive battery to select them, it would lose approximately $170 million over a 10-year period. On the basis of validity studies carried out on approximately 500

jobs in the national economy, the U.S. Department of Labor has estimated that the use of aptitude scores to place workers in jobs would result in large increases in productivity and save the national economy upwards of $178 billion."

So this is the kind of thing you're up against when you go against norm-referenced tests.

Alternative Ways to Measure Ability

What can we do? Sam Meisels has given you one very fine alternative that works in the context of enabling teachers and parents and children to guide their activities in the context of what is occurring in the school. However, if we are concerned about this other issue of predicting beyond the immediate context, then I have to say that a criterion-referenced approach won't work.

Sam is fond of saying that tests are not good or bad in and of themselves — it's how they're used. And he's shown you a wonderful way to use criterion-referenced instruments in an educational setting. The point I'm concerned about here is different — it has to do with measuring ability which is also at issue in achievement testing. And for that criterion-referenced tests are not well-suited.

Nancy Cole writes about this in the *Educational Researcher*: "By the 1960s behavioral psychology dominated conceptions of learning and psychology in education. The learning theory with which a generation of educators grew up came quite directly from this field. The theories that supported behavioral psychology were well suited to the political times of increasing public concern that children were not learning to read, write, or perform basic arithmetic operations. There was also public concern that students were not learning basic factual information. The result of this merging of theoretical and political orientation was a decade in which the strongly dominant conception of education achievement in public discussion was in terms of specific, separate basic skills and facts."

Cole goes on to say, "Much educational achievement testing turned away from a long-time concern with testing general skills in broad areas of the school curriculum, and turned towards testing smaller, more curriculum-specific skills. This trend, which has gone largely under the name of criterion-referenced testing, further promoted the notion that important school skills can and should be listed as discrete pieces of desired competence, have immediate behavioral outcomes that can be segmented and individually tested, and be clearly linked to a specific school curriculum. Notions of generalizability" — and here's the point — "of skills or use of information beyond immediate demonstration of mastery were overwhelmed by pressing concerns to test curricular goals directly, match curriculum and tests, and assure accountability for learning of the basic skills and facts."

The problem that is encountered in the ongoing debate between norm- and criterion-referenced tests is clearly evidenced in the continuing debate between Mehrens and Kaminski which is in *Issues in Measurement and Education* and Cohn and Hyman who are defending a criterion-referenced approach that is used in the state of Missouri. As Sam has pointed out, practically every state in the country have these things. Cohn and Hyman take issue with the position that Mehrens and Kaminski take that we shouldn't be providing instruction that is aligned to assessment, and in this connection they say this: "Mehrens and Kaminski suspect smartness indicators that test what was taught. Apparently smart kids know what they weren't taught — a strange idea unless one is operating from a genetic theory of smartness. In contrast we assume that within the academic domain, what we know and can do are learned. Therefore we reject the idea that a test of what was not directly taught is the only dependable way to measure how smart someone is."

Now, in their argument with Mehrens and Kaminski what do they do. The first thing they do is to point out the wonders they have achieved with their criterion-referenced test. But in defending themselves against Mehrens and Kaminski's attack that nothing has been learned but the specific content on the test, guess what they do? They go right back to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. It's the only thing there is that can answer the question, are you teaching the child to read or are you teaching performance on a specific set of test items.

Redefining Ability As One's Position in a Developmental Sequence

So the major concern here with the norm- and criterion-referenced approaches is generalization beyond specific items. The problem is that with a

norm-referenced instrument, if you try to align your curriculum in any way to what is assessed or even devise an assessment instrument that is based on your curriculum, you're in trouble. As we've seen there's an ethical issue and there's also even a legal issue. On the other hand, if you go to a criterion-referenced assessment you're in trouble as well because that approach doesn't have the construct of ability in it at all, it comes out of behavioral psychology which doesn't use that construct.

Thus the public's need for information about the abilities of the children remains in a state of limbo. The approach that my colleagues and I have taken to address this problem — and it's the major concern that we have — is to redefine the concept of ability. We think that's what is needed. Rather than defining ability as position in a norm group, we think it should be defined as position in a developmental sequence. So you relate the ability score to what the child can do, not to how he compares with other individuals. Sam has shown very aptly how insidious that issue of comparing one individual to another can be and the destructive kinds of consequences it can have for children as well as schools.

But there is a way to use a development approach to assessment that defines ability by linking it to position in a developmental sequence that can give you information that goes beyond the specific assessment items. Time does not permit me to deal with that now. I will say in essence how it works.

If you know that a child, say, can add 17 and eight, you know he can also count to five. There's an ability to generalize. And we have developed ways to systematically capitalize on that idea so that we're able to go beyond specific test items and assess children's ability.

The Role of Assessment in Transition

We need a happy ending to this story. If we are successful in devising better assessment tools that can measure ability, postal workers would increase their speed and accuracy in sorting mail, military recruits would better be able to steer a Bradley tank through an obstacle course, divorce rates and crime would decline, and our standard of living would rise by $178 billion a year — now wouldn't all that be wonderful. Of course none of that will happen. But I think assessment does have a small and important role to play in transition. I think it is to provide society the information that it needs to document the progress of the nation's children — in other words, to measure ability; to keep teachers from being victimized by the need for accurate assessment information; and to help children realize their right to learning opportunities that are appropriate to their developmental levels.

Chapter Six

Conference Workshop Highlights

Susan Thompson, Patricia M. Nourot, FranCione Allen, Ph.D., Ruth Nenabar, Margaret Wood, Linda Espinosa, Ph.D., Helen Maniates, Cecelia Alvarado Kuster, Eleanor Clement-Glass, John Bergan, Ph.D., Yolanda Garcia, Peter Mangione, Ph.D., Ellen R. De Ridder, Jeanne Jehl, Carol Kamin

Preserving the gains made by young children in Head Start and other government-funded preschool programs has been a critical issue almost from their inception, noted Yolanda Garcia and Peter Mangione in their workshop on **Preschool to School Linkages: the National Perspective.** As far back as 1969 the U.S. Department of Education's Follow-Through project began exploring the importance of pedagogical continuity for young children. Subsequent initiatives by organizations such as the National Association of the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Elementary School Principals have explored the same issue: how to ensure successful transition from preschool into the primary grades. Today at the national, state and local levels, research continues even as policymakers continue to struggle with the issue and local educators attempt to implement some of what's already been learned.

Pedagogical Continuity: National, State, and Local Initiatives

The collective effort has paid off with a growing understanding of the elements of success as well as of common barriers to transition. Mangione reviewed what's been learned most recently, from Head Start's Project Developmental Continuity as articulated by Yale Professor Sharon Lynn Kagan at last year's national symposium on strengthening linkage between early childhood education and early elementary school. Head Start's multi-site study revealed the effectiveness of the following practices in smoothing preschool to primary school transitions for young children: 1) written agreements between the Head Start program and the public school; 2) lasting commitment to continuity as an integral part of the school's educational program; 3) a focus on continuity issues throughout the school year rather than at just one time, e.g., at the end of the school year 4) training for parents in how to prepare their preschool child for public school and how to work with the school themselves; and 5) staff visits between the Head Start and school programs

Also coming to light during Head Start's study were some potential barriers to successful transition, chief among them: 1) different educational approaches taken by Head Start and public school programs; 2) failure of preschool programs to pass along records; 3) inability of some parents to relate to the public school; 4) inability of some students to perform at school standards; and 5) communication difficulties between Head Start and school staff.

Finally, Kagan told last year's symposium audience, those committed to better transitions for young children need a shared vision that includes continuity in philosophy, pedagogy and structure, which means among other things, more consistency in the way preschool and elementary school teachers are trained, licensed and compensated.

At a state level, California policymakers began seriously exploring the issue of transition in 1987 when the School Readiness Task Force was appointed to address the question, "what kind of education is necessary during the crucial early years of a child's life — from ages four through six — to prepare a child for the 21st century?" Most striking — and reassuring to many early childhood educators — was its recognition that the 4 to 6 age span should be treated as a continuum. In their workshop, **The California Department of Education Early**

Primary Initiative, Susan Thompson and Patricia M. Nourot reviewed the task force findings and the response from California's Department of Education.

Heading the task force's 1988 list of recommendations was adoption of "an appropriate, integrated, experiential curriculum" for children in this age range. The department initially set out to prepare materials on developmentally appropriate curriculum, but when it quickly became apparent that curriculum and assessment are virtually inseparable, the task was broadened to include both. Last September the department issued a draft advisory on assessment. Of particular relevance to those interested in transition is its call for performance-based "authentic assessment" to be fully integrated in the curriculum starting in preschool and continuing through the primary grades. Described in the advisory are three tools for authentic assessment: portfolios, developmental profiles and documented teacher observation. Above all, noted the advisory, the findings of such assessment must be passed along to future teachers, "who need to have information about where the child has been, the strategies that are a part of his/her repertoire and what pace he or she has maintained in the past. This information must be recorded over time, and in varying contexts, to reflect the child's learning patterns and pace."

The department has also issued a related legal advisory warning districts that assessment tools must be free of cultural, linguistic and gender bias. Currently in the works is an advisory on recommended curriculum modules for early primary grades. These documents are available from the California Department of Education.

At a local level, a Marin County, California school district and the publicly-funded preschool programs in a low income community have been working hard to forge closer links for the sake of their children. The Marin City/Sausalito Schools Transition Project is one piece of the broader Bay Area Early Intervention Program, whose purpose is to develop comprehensive coordinated services for children and families from pregnancy through the first eight years of a child's life. The transition project is a piece that focuses specifically on engendering preschool to grade school continuity.

In **A Community Experiment with Transition**, Far West's FranCione Allen explained that the laboratory is helping the Marin City/Sausalito community implement model transition practices to link Marin City's preschool programs with the early primary programs in the Sausalito schools. Three groups have been created to work on the issues of continuity and transition, identifying strategies for strengthening links between the preschool and school program. A leadership group is composed of both school and preschool program administrators; a teachers group includes kindergarten and first grade teachers from the Sausalito school and teachers from Marin City's early childhood programs; and a parent group comprises both preschool and early primary school parents.

As preschool teachers participating in the project, Ruth Nenebar and Margaret Wood offered an insiders view, speaking enthusiastically of joint planning they have done with participating elementary school teachers. One result has been joint workshops for teachers at both levels addressing subjects of mutual interest, such as developmentally appropriate practices and how to work with drug-exposed children.

Continuity: Vertical and Horizontal

Today's common wisdom says children do best when their lives are fully integrated, which means those who work with and for children must do what they can to ensure continuity in all aspects of a child's life. Yale's Kagan has observed that school children face two types of transition: vertical, as when they move from preschool to kindergarten and from kindergarten into first grade, and horizontal, as when they move between home and school or from one service provider to another. Both are equally important.

Interagency Collaboration Helps Smooth the Way

Today we see more human service agencies, including schools and preschools, collaborating with the aim of smoothing a child's transition, whether it's a preschool and a primary school developing curricular continuity or a school district and other human service agencies working to create better links between school and other areas of a child's life. While the Marin City/Sausalito project focuses primarily on vertical continuity, San Diego's New Beginnings, described earlier by Tom Payzant, is designed to address continuity issues between home and school.

New Beginnings is premised on the belief that it takes a whole community to raise a child, explained Jeanne Jehl, a San Diego City Schools administrator currently on special assignment to work on development of the new collaboration. Build the capacities of their families and you support the children, said Jehl during **Connecting Preschool, School, and Community: Barriers and Strategies**, a panel discussion with Dr. Carol Kamin, executive director of Children's Action Alliance in Arizona.

Because San Diego's feasibility study revealed that district parents find schools trustworthy, the district and its fellow human service agency collaborators opted to locate an integrated services center at a school in one of the city's most troubled neighborhoods. Furthermore, they agreed to focus on and fund prevention rather than crisis services. Reaching consensus on such philosophic issues is, said Jehl, one of the biggest challenges for would-be collaborators.

By all reports, collaboration is easier said than done. While differences of philosophy is in part responsible for pervasive fragmentation of services, funding practices deserve a large part of the blame, said Carol Kamin. Specifically, categorical funding leads agencies to believe they are serving discrete populations when in fact, their services and service populations often overlap with those of other agencies. The way in which early childhood programs have evolved has added to the fragmentation, for example, special needs early childhood programs operate separately from Head Start programs, which in turn operate independently from private sector preschool programs.

Kamin argued the importance of a coordinated system that links all early childhood services — preschools, Head Start programs and child care programs — to the public schools. But given that early childhood services are pluralistic and, at least in part attempt to meet the needs of their respective and often differing constituencies, can there be effective coordination? Should there be one coordinating agency? These are the types of questions policymakers have to resolve as they attempt to create greater linkage between early childhood and elementary school programs.

Starting Small but Thinking Big

These questions haven't stopped California's Redwood City School District from adopting its own initiative to ease the transitions its children must make — both vertical and horizontal.

Several years ago, a high drop-out rate prompted district officials to study the research literature on school failure. They concluded that the district needed to make early childhood education a central part of its mission. A decision was made to transform existing district-run preschools by implementing a child-centered, developmentally-oriented early childhood program. But high expectations for a rapid transformation were soon dashed, explained Linda Espinosa in **Coordinated, Comprehensive Services for Children from 3 to 8.** When change proved difficult for many teachers who were already established in their ways, district planners realized they needed to start over — this time in a small way with only those teachers most open to new ideas. The district's early childhood initiative was scaled back to one preschool, which was already located at a school site. Even so, it took two full years to develop and implement the new developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).

The benefits were quantified when at the end of third grade the students took the California Test of Basic Skills performed on par overall with their peers who had attended a more traditional neighboring preschool and primary school. On the test's mathematical applications subsection, they actually did better than those at the other school. And when the subsamples of at-risk children from these two preschools were compared, those who attended the developmentally appropriate program scored a half grade higher on all parts of the test than did their traditionally-schooled counterparts.

The second segment of Redwood City's early childhood initiative, which got under way a year or so ago, addresses home and school transition issues. As part of a five-year demonstration project, the district has introduced a mental health services component serving preschool and early elementary school children and their families. At risk families will be visited by home educators. These specially trained paraprofessionals are able to link families with necessary services provided by various human service agencies who have agreed to coordinate their activities. Additionally, each school will house

a family resource center where parents can meet each other and find information about available social, health and job services.

Linking School and Culture

At the heart of the Redwood City district's efforts to facilitate both preschool/school and school/home transitions for its students has been being responsive to the large number of minority language students and families, said Espinosa. Indeed, said Cecelia Alvarado Kuster, cultural discontinuity can be a major stumbling block for such youngsters. Happily, teachers can do much to smooth the way, explained Kuster in **Home, School and Preschool: Family and Culture.** To counteract potential racism or cultural prejudice in the classroom, she suggested, teachers might consider the "anti-bias" curriculum developed by Louise Derman Sparks and colleagues, which is available from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

In addition to adopting some specific anti-bias practices, teachers are well positioned to serve as cultural mediators. They should, said Kuster, get to know the culture of every one of their students to prepare themselves to mediate any cultural conflicts that might arise. To learn about their students' cultures, she suggested, teachers should gather written material about typical family routines in a particular culture and establish both formal and informal communication with parents, including making home visits. Communication should not be limited to formal parent/teacher conferences or only when a problem arises. Teachers might consider inviting parents to visit the class to share something meaningful about them or their culture with all the students. Finally, teachers need to learn about community resources.

Equally important, said Kuster, is a teacher's recognition of his own prejudices and bias. Teachers and administrators could profit from forming a support group to explore these issues and study the research on bias. The process should include defining strategies for eliminating bias. The support group can also serve as a forum for discussing specific classroom issues as they arise. Educators who are conscious of their own cultural perspectives and bias are better able to affirm the home cultures of families and empower students and families to deal with the multicultural challenges they face at school.

Children with Special Needs

Transitions occur frequently for special needs children and their families, said Ellen R. DeRidder in **Moving through the Service Delivery System: Transition Issues for Families with Special Needs Children**. DeRidder observed that the first transition is when the child moves from intensive care to home. More transitions confront them as they deal with a changing array of service agencies throughout the child's youth. Each change presents numerous challenges. At an emotional level, the family must transfer friendship from the old provider to the new one, building a new relationship even as it experiences the loss of the old one. At the same time they must deal with discrepancies from one program to another in eligibility requirements and even services. And underlying it all is the concern that a new agency might not accept their special needs child. A system seeking to provide a continuum of services to children and families must address such concerns.

Interagency collaboration is essential to smoothing the transitions, said DeRidder. With this in mind, federal law PL99-457, adopted in 1986, mandated creation of a transdisciplinary team to develop a service plan for each child in the system. The team works closely with the parents.

In Los Angeles County, the first step to implementing the new law was doing a needs assessment of families and agencies within the service delivery system, said DeRidder. Transitions emerged as an issue requiring attention. A committee was created to develop a transition plan with the intent of ensuring that children and their families would move through the system without interruption of services.

DeRidder noted that agencies seeking to coordinate services for the sake of families and children — whether special needs or not — face numerous potential barriers, as identified by Edgar and Tazioli in 1985. They are 1) a lack of awareness by service professionals of the resources and requirements of other agencies; 2) differing eligibility criteria within the system, e.g., Head Start and local school districts have different requirements for classifying special needs children; 3) information exchange can be problematic with trust between sending agency — that currently serving the child — and receiving agency easily undermined as when, for

example, the sending agency holds on to a child too long or sends overly prescriptive information to the receiving agency; 4) inadequate or non-existent pre-planning; 5) the receiving agency gives no feedback to the sending agency so the same mistakes continue to be made; 6) procedural guidelines vary among agencies as when, for example, differences in schedules inhibit communication between sending and receiving professionals; and 7) personal relationships do not form between professionals in sending and receiving agencies — relationships that could help build trust and engender better communication.

Instructional Practice: a Key to Continuity

Meanwhile back in the classroom, educators are gaining a growing appreciation for the importance of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), which is considered essential to continuity in a child's early educational experience. A DAP cornerstone is the active involvement of children in their own learning. By contrast certain educational practices such as paper and pencil drills and rote memory invite less creative involvement by the child. In **Developmentally Appropriate Practices or "What's a Little Kid like You Doing in a Place like This?"** Eleanor Clement-Glass of the Beryl Buck Education Institute and Helen Maniates of Early Childhood Resources illustrated these points. Giving each participant received a real flower, a picture of a flower and an artificial flower, they noted that the imitations yielded substantially less information than did the real thing. The imitations, for example, revealed nothing about the texture or the scent of a real flower. A developmentally appropriate curriculum, said Clement-Glass and Maniates, grounds children in the concrete — real objects and experiences — from which they learn to abstract and generalize. In a DAP classroom, information is given in a meaningful context. Additionally, children learn to make choices, working within a structure defined by the teacher; they take initiative in planning, performing, and evaluating their own work; and they discuss their work both with adults and peers.

Guiding developmentally appropriate practice must be an understanding of how children learn, said Clement-Glass and Maniates. Potential learning activities must be evaluated on two levels: from a normative perspective, teachers must ask whether the activity is age appropriate, and from an individual perspective, they must ask whether it's appropriate for this particular child. In other words, five-year-olds share similar characteristics but each is individual, and programs must be responsive to the individual child.

Teachers accustomed to the "drill and skill," one-size-fits-all approach may find it challenging to make their own transition — the switch to a child-centered classroom in which learning is an active, integrated experience for children. Thus, said Clement-Glass and Maniates, staff development is essential.

Assessing Progress

California's Department of Education is certainly not alone in its call for authentic assessment. University of Arizona's John Bergan issued his own advisory on authentic assessment in his workshop on **Path-referenced Assessment in the Service of Teaching and Learning**. At their best, said Bergan, assessment instruments will reveal a child's abilities, not merely performance on a specific test item. They will also reflect the child's development during the long transition from preschool through the early primary grades, revealing an ordered progression of capabilities reflecting changes in children's ability level. And finally, they will provide information that can be used by both parents and teachers to plan developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for children.

In this regard, both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing are deficient, said Bergan. Norm-referenced testing compares a child's performance in relation to others of the same age or grade level, but it's usually unrelated to the child's classroom experience. And when it is, it's most likely because the teacher has aligned curriculum with the test. For its part, criterion-referenced assessments test only isolated skills, which are not necessarily indicative of broader abilities.

Bergan and his colleagues have developed an assessment instrument based on what they call a "path-referenced" approach. This assessment tool indicates where a child's performance falls in a broad developmental sequence. Their research has shown that children consistently exhibit lower level abilities before higher level abilities on each of the developmental scales. So, for example, because children learn to count forward before they can count backward, the child who counts backward

would necessarily score higher on the math scale than one who only counts forward.

Path-referenced assessment measures abilities as they relate directly to the child's classroom learning experience, said Bergan. For example, the language scale on a path-referenced test focuses on the child's skill in understanding and communicating with others. Likewise, the math scale corresponds to the child's level of sophistication in math skills used in every day life.

Related instructional materials developed by Bergan and colleagues tell teachers what type of learning experiences would help the child advance to the next developmental level. If used to guide curriculum planning throughout preschool and the early primary grades, he said, path-referenced testing can help provide a continuum of developmentally appropriate learning experiences for each child.

APPENDIX A

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